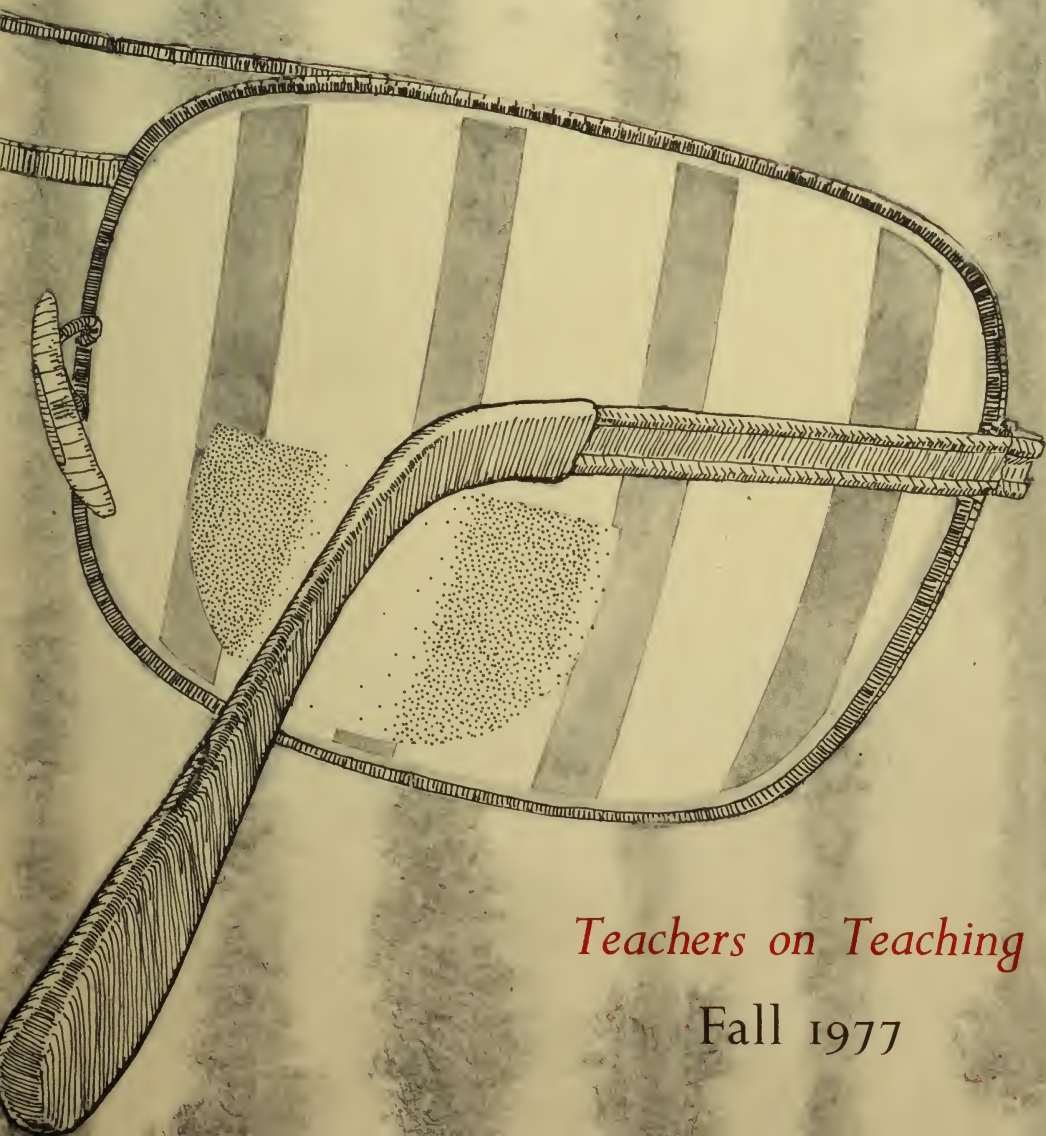


The Andover Review

A JOURNAL FOR SECONDARY EDUCATION



Teachers on Teaching

Fall 1977

AS NATALIE SCHORR suggests in her review, it is seldom if ever that teachers have a chance to talk about their “lonely profession.” The response to our offer to them that they should do just that was gratifying to us and we hope will be equally attractive to our readers. We begin with a series of articles which concern themselves with the way in which teachers are attracted to and turned away from teaching. This section is followed by a second series in which teachers view themselves as practitioners.

We are grateful to William Irwin Thompson and Harper & Row for the opportunity to raise the haunting question of the place of secondary education in the “Postindustrial Society” — one to which we must address ourselves in the near future.

In this issue we come close to justifying the “review” in our title. The last three articles, though not under the heading of Review, are reactions to books which have as their base teaching in marvellously various ways.

Our next two issues will be devoted to the ways in which adolescents learn, a topic which is rich in theory and thin in practice.

The Editor

THE REVIEW invites articles, poetry and graphics from all quarters and will select material with concern for secondary education. If mailed, graphic work should be insured by the sender. It will be returned in due course in the same manner.

A JOURNAL FOR SECONDARY EDUCATION

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Teacher Born Again

Selfishness, Letting Go and Inner Opposition

HAROLD C. MARTIN

The born-again teacher, like the born-again Christian, may be more convincing about the experience than about the reasons for it. So I feel, at least, in the first flush of returning to the classroom after a dozen years almost completely separated from it and more than twice that many in which my time was split between administration and teaching.

So far, the experience has been great. I have no regrets of any consequence (I need less money than I used to!) and doubt that I shall have; and I'm reasonably confident that what I've found so far will continue to be there for me as long as I teach. Admittedly, I am extraordinarily lucky, not only in being able to do the kind of teaching I want to do and feel most able to do decently well but in being able to choose, as few can, how much I shall be teacher *tout court* and how much something else — committeeman, coordinator, author, professional gadfly.

Because I do have choices and because I make them after forty years of academic activity of various kinds, what I have to say about the experience of this return to teaching may be personal to the point of idiosyncrasy. Then, again, it may not be. For all I know, teaching (or doctoring or lawyering) may be as unconditional as preaching — there either is a vocation or there isn't, and if you have it or find it, you know it for what it is, be you twenty or sixty. But even if that be true, the experience may not be so savory in one set of conditions as another; therefore, this note may turn out to be more about the spices of my life than about anything more serious.

There are of course pieties about teaching, and I recognize some obligation to mention them, however half-heartedly, if for no other reason than to propitiate gods who may have surprises up their sleeves for me yet: Milton's hungry sheep looking up to be fed, the sacred classroom communion (of saints or saints and sinners), standing in the great line of those who link past culture to future, even promoting the welfare of mankind. Everyone hopes those noble matters somehow figure, as objectives if not outcomes, but they do strike me as being less of the bloodstream than of the frontal lobe. At any rate, though I'm not sure why I left a presidency for teaching, I'm sure enough it was not for any such devotional purposes, willing as I am to have them attributed to me if anyone wants to take the trouble.

Back to savor: what pleases me most in my renewed life is discovering privacy again, the privacy of continuous hours in study, the privacy of a lone search for forgotten or elusive bits of information, a spacious privacy in which time moves swiftly but gives me no sense of being hurried. Written, that sounds selfish and it is, but one thing I have learned in the past forty years in and about the academy is this: a certain kind of selfishness is the major source of strength for a teacher, at least for the kind of teacher I want to be. Without it, teaching grows thinner year by year, more mechanical, no matter how much disguised by cultivated eccentricities, wit-tiness, moral fulminations or chatty anecdotalism. I think that may be because good teaching is always overflow, and it takes time alone to produce the flood. The bad days I can recall from my own earlier classroom experiences are those in which I was only well enough prepared. They were even worse than the ones in which I was less than well enough prepared because one writes the latter off and resolves to sin no more. To be just well enough prepared is, for me, very unsettling. It strains my nerves and my facial muscles. By contrast, to be full past containing exacts only one final effort, of restraint, which is the respect one has for an audience.

This is a counsel of perfection, of course, and I know that as well as anyone else. Most teachers, in school or college, find privacy, time for uninterrupted reading and reflection, very scarce. But I've noted

that a great many flee from what little is available — flee to committees, to the coffee lounge, to the tennis court. That's not surprising, I suppose. It takes time to be private, continuous time, and fifteen minutes caught here and there are simply not useful for anything but breathing.

The Experience of "Letting Go"

If I'm not careful, this will turn into exhortation, and I've no ground for that, so back to the main line. Privacy — and nothing else? Certainly something else: what Emily Dickinson, in a very different context, called the great experience of "letting go." (If the Metaphysicals could make death a metaphor for sexual experience, I see no reason it may not serve for teaching as well.) The letting go ought to be reluctant, of course, or at least it ought to seem reluctant, both to the letter and the lettee (Can one get away with such terms without sounding like Donald Barthelme?). The teacher who just *spills* is self-indulgent and probably narcissistic to boot, certainly disrespectful all around. The one who yields inch by inch to the (stimulated or voluntary) tuggings of students not only gives them more — Puritan ethic speaking there — but gets more himself. Last spring I had two classes, one mainly of senior majors, the other a potpourri, freshmen through seniors, majors in a half-dozen fields, many still uncommitted. In the first, ostensibly a seminar, nothing I was able to do overcame students' apparent expectation of oracular enlightenment. In the second, question and answers flew about the room as though in a sort of Alice-in-Wonderland ping-pong game, one played with several balls and everyone from spectator to umpire participating. I always left a session of the first feeling drained, but of the second feeling at once exhausted and exhilarated. By my definition, one was a performance, the other was teaching, and I have no hesitation at all about making a choice, if one is available. Delphos is a great spot for the gods, but I feel better in the Agora. This fall, when I'll be doing the seminar again with another group, I'm going to break my back if necessary finding some way of generating struggle: even cherished privacy goes sour if its usefulness is only evacuation.

Beyond the privacy and the special sort of letting go, I think there's one thing more, somewhere inside the first and antecedent to the second. I don't know quite what to call it; I'm not even absolutely sure I know what it is. But I may find out in the process of preparing for and teaching a course which I shall offer this fall. It's a synthetic affair, part of my appointment at Trinity carrying the obligation to depart from the departmental, and for months I've been trying to find the ground that will be a reference point throughout. The title of the course is "Voyages and Voyagers," and the rubric says it will deal with voyage as "report, fiction, and metaphor." It's the metaphor which will matter, of course, and after months of reading it begins to make itself apparent — not climbing Everest because it's there, something more than the lure of Chaucer's *ferne halwes* and *strenge strondes*, more even than an Archimedean Eureka! Voyages are too often or too much a re-tracing for that, either in fact or by analogy. Even going to the moon, whether with Cyrano or with Harrison Schmidt, proves to be a thin activity in the telling except as the trip explores something else, in the main something internal. That, I think, is the source of the tension that makes voyages — and discoveries — what they are, at least for us moderns. The qualification turns out to be important and to reflect an advantage we have over the ancients: we can read Homer's *Odyssey* as bold narrative, which is probably what he mainly meant it to be, and as a flight of metaphors. The closer one gets to this century, despite the sternness of science, the more inevitable it becomes that every voyage and every discovery will take on a metaphorical cast, will shine as much light inward as outward. If one can imagine the voyages of the *Beagle* and of the *Pequod* to have been a mid-century competition, it is Melville, not Darwin, who is the modern man.

Do I divagate? As Whitman said. . . . This third part of the born-again experience of teaching, as I am discovering it, is — to put the matter more prosaically — that of locating the central oppositions in one's own nature: the lust after the marvellous pitted against the driving need to doubt, for instance. I become more complex the more I read and reflect and therefore the more ready to respect the complexity in others — not just to respect, to enjoy. As I said above, no regrets.



Teacher Rejoyce

A Reminiscence

DAVID M. SMITH

one more conference before lunch would have to be this wretched story the you-bastard-she-screamed-angrily-as-the-blood-poured-from-her-eyeballs school rarely see it quite so bad most kids go in for death by car wreck cancer victims dying cell by cell subtle by comparison thirtyseven pages hes written here gypsies lust teleportation bank robbery murder electrocution took me an hour and a half to read and annotate just a few questions like why if the hero can teleport his way out of tight spots by whispering his wifes name he shoots it out with the cops when they catch him in a bank vault author sits there flexing shoulder muscles champion wrestler and football player looks like hes wearing shoulder pads under his teeshirt quite annoyed by my pedantry why dont I try to appreciate the grand sweep of the action instead of pointing out these trivial inconsistencies or maybe he knows its crap just putting me on admits finally that he lost interest toward the end page 3 probably ask him gently now doesnt he think he might be able to sustain his interest better if he wrote on subjects which he knew more about not necessarily things that actually happened to him hes day-dreaming about his girlfriend back home

more than ten years since I started teaching teacher of mine roped me into it no outright coercion power of example on susceptible adolescent mind sat there at one end of an oval table winding rubber bands around his fingers dignified witty kind serious learned now Id say durable but that didnt occur to me then nothing occurred to me then only the romance of it noble occupation building minds esteemed friend of youth college classmates thought I was barmy back to the womb they said all lawyers now used to

amaze me the hours they put in on their jobs call the office if you want me before 9 pm life of a slave no good ends either you cant lose one told me if you win youve won a case if you lose justice is done greasing the way for corporations to make things worse for the rest of us no way to live even with the fifty or sixty thousand a year and expenseaccount lunches is teaching a way to live ten years before I even began to wonder about it romping along on surge of idealism the perfect amateur absolutely lovedriven at it winter and summer papers neckhigh if you want me before 11 pm catch me at my desk couldnt think of anything to do with the ten thousand a year unite my avocation and my vocation Frost said exactly teaching was life life was teaching as my two eyes make one in sight thirtyone when I realized how dry I was desert creatures building houses at the bottom of my well frstrate sight Marion well never have a damp cellar looked around at unfaltering colleagues did their wells hold more to begin with did they know some trick of living without water decided to take time off drinking thinking space go abroad come back all tanked up for another decade of work toured Europe Africa walked halfway across the United States got married came back tanked up with doubts is teaching a way to live teach them the difference between lay and lie and why Thoreau went out to Walden so they can become lawyers and grease the way for corporations to make things worse for everyone thats too cynical we dont know what were teaching them what happens to it the fact is the sweetest dream that labor knows Frost again what a scythe told him when theyd laid out a meadow in rows fact straight from the latin that which has been done clear enough if its cut grass rake it bale it weigh it feed it to cattle not my work though gone as soon as done they carry it away or leave it abuse it lose it let it lie unused stuff gets learned of course matter of faith mostly have to pretend we can certify it finally working up to his ability through command of key concepts A B C D F they go on because they get older hassle them a while then pass them ahead tests exploratory brain surgery done with butter knives all a mystery queerly satisfying though better than installing a quota of camshafts good exercise for the mind struggle with human complexity keeps you getting com-

placent nurtures speculation but the work the work the work the work athirst for my juices unslakeable he who does not work neither shall he eat okay Im not indolent by nature no fun laying around as theyd put it all day life without work quite unimaginable well not quite would set my own tasks read write study travel learn languages too selfish in the end have to share the richness teaching a good way to do it trouble is it eats you right up he who does work the work eats him drinks your juices sucks the marrow out of your bones sheer greed wont share wants it all cant escape it aims so nebulous achievement so hard to measure can never be sure youve done enough students like Chinese boxes problems inside problems bad spelling bad syntax bad thought bad attitude bad homelife bad society brought up on the tube never read a book looks boring too much description parents busy making money throw us the kids get in there and teach in loco parentis enough to drive you loco how do we even begin my friend in public school 130 students at a time my neurons fray with 60 that creative writing class I just finished up only 15 my whole responsibility for six weeks should have been a breeze blew me away midnight preparations papers neckhigh no limits work expands to fill available time creeps over into unavailable time theyre always at you with their needs needs they dont even know about half the time suppose I had one student still be a sixty-hour week Ill bet I like it thats the irony sign of a fargone workaholic took the cure and went right back to his old ways chalkdust on his breath morning noon and night walks with a stagger too much in his briefcase neglects his family I like it sense of organization productivity meaning latent obsessive love of plans and systems love of being the cynosure performing teasing cajoling demanding warm bumptious creatures these kids are put them back in their places play with them as if I were a kid myself make a difference to them even though I dont know what maybe fool them into thinking that rotten languages doesnt get by in real life keep them laughing at least keep them awake I like it until I look back on it losses show in retrospect havent read anything for months but textbooks and illiterate essays havent written anything but marginalia they never leave big enough margins I elide to the brink of unintelligibility they probably

dont read it anyway not even a letter havent had ten minutes to loaf and invite my soul maybe I can learn to pace myself other teachers do fortyyear men some of them burned out others still damned good they must pace themselves that and increase efficiency learn more about what they cant hope for messianic approach a young mans mistake am I my students keeper only so much psychic energy to go around save a few ergs for yourself hombre the lesson of the second decade wonder if it means goodbye to the pleasures of the first.

she gives me a blond blueeyed hug white dress bare shoulders she has just graduated clouds streaking across the sun punch and cookies laid out on long tables her cheeks flush the way they did when she made a daring point in class snap goes the flag on top of the flagpole bang the rope against the side of the pole her papers bright ideas tortuous phraseology a whole year we fought about it no decision judges were looking the other way exposition should be clean and sharp I told her banged my desk when I was alone with her sentences sure she meant something what could it be rites of passage intoxicate me this morning ceremonial wine to the old workaholic the fact is the sweetest dream that labor knows be sure to send me a postcard I say she is going to Europe for the summer to Yale in the fall.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

These gardens were laid out by one who cared
for every smallest symmetry. He drew
neat promenades, his flower beds were squared,
and over all he placed a point of view,

a belvedere from which his visitors
could look down measured vistas and take in
a firm reordering of the out-of-doors —
no blade of grass where it should not have been.

Now saplings riot where his roses were,
the fountains choke, the bordered paths are gone,
and without even an "I'm sorry sir,"
children cavort on his dishevelled lawn.

DAVID M. SMITH



Leaving Teaching

One Man's Alternative

STEPHEN MARX

For eight years, starting right after I got out of college, I taught in private secondary schools. Last year I stopped teaching; I worked in a couple of motels, made a very short movie, read, wrote a few poems and many letters and spent a fair part of my time wandering around Albuquerque, New Mexico, in a blissful daze. I was not only happy: I was a little stunned by the depth and wealth of my happiness.

I'm not one who often takes his own happiness so greatly to heart, but my experience of the past year was in the nature of a revelation, or of the break-up of a long dead love affair. I felt enormously free. There were no papers, no committee meetings, no teacher reports to eat up my time after work. And when I went home to my rented house, it was, at least, not the property of the institution for which I had worked all day. I felt independent. I arrived there gratefully each night, pulling in to park between the Baptist Church and the Taste-Freez under a Pepsi billboard that changed miraculously to a tequila ad one day while I was at work. I felt as honored at that as if the water had suddenly turned to wine.

That billboard was my gateway home. Certainly it was preferable to the Christian posters that were everywhere in Albuquerque, each one sporting a face as empty as a Dutch cheese and the slogan "I FOUND IT!" I don't drink either Pepsi or tequila, and I do object to selling things by showing them next to sexy women; still I preferred the tequila ad to others around town that said "IF YOU DON'T LOVE JESUS, YOU AIN'T LIVIN'!" In fact, in the neighborhood where I lived, the billboards were the most colorful things around, although

there certainly was lots of life. There was Teresa's Flea Market across the street, open from Thursday to Sunday, blaring a single Mexican LP each week, and there were the kids who played naked or in underwear in the dust by the road and who christened me 'John Andrews' after a bespectacled, serious-looking Anglo who did the local news on TV; and I suppose that from someone else's point-of-view there was a vision of me — headed out for my daily run down Bridge St. to the Rio Grande, chased by dogs, waved-to or sworn-at from cars, joined for a few steps by paperboys yelling "Hey Steve Austin" — while I smiled wanly and made my way past the SAV-U, and the PAYLESS, and the HOUSE OF ANSWERS, sweating and happy, and finally heading home under the billboard that correctly addressed my aspirations of the moment: surely no ecumenical adman, not even one who worked for Pepsi, could have objected to my longing for a brightly packaged beer, pulled cold and wet from the refrigerator, to accompany my reading, in the bath, of *Leaves of Grass*, or *Of Christian Doctrine*, or *Hard Times*.

This summer I came back east, to see old friends and to see what it was like to teach again, for a few weeks. There was a Pepsi machine in the entrance to my dorm, and because Pepsi has switched to recyclable aluminum cans, which are soft and can be pulled out of the machine by force, I was constantly catching students stealing the sodas. I would point out that much of the students' lives was predicated on the principle of property rights, and that there was a notable contradiction — to put it as neutrally as possible — in their refusal to recognize those rights as they apply to Pepsi-Cola. "Well," someone would say, "Pepsi's rich enough — a quarter won't kill them." There are plenty of possible rejoinders to that sort of remark of course, but one I often used, perhaps seeing in my mind the image of my neighborhood in Albuquerque, was to ask the students if they didn't think they were pretty well off, themselves. "No," they'd say, they were "just average — well, maybe a little higher." Then what did they think was "average"? I wondered.

One night I asked about fifteen students to guess at the median income, in this country, for a 'head of household.' The students thought it was "around \$30,000." At the same time, they denied that

they were the beneficiaries of anything like a class system and said that they knew some people at home who were “pretty poor” — families where the man made about \$15,000 a year, they thought. They were incredulous to learn the the median income for a ‘head of household’ in this country is \$11,000 and that substantially less than ten percent make \$30,000.

A whole series of episodes like this has clarified for me the common statement that private schools are somehow “unreal.” They seem so, I have come to think, primarily because they don’t really know what they are and whom they serve — or else they don’t say what they know. I think it is usually assumed, for example, that the most important criteria for acceptance to such schools are intellectual; but if the median income for the families of the students who go to a given institution is \$50,000 or above, then those students come, by and large, from the richest one percent of American families. One may then reasonably suspect (as I do) that wealth, even more than personal achievement, is the determining characteristic of the student body. At no point, in my association with private schools, has any of them ever stated, in economic terms, where its students come from and where they are going; nor has anyone made clear the function of the school in forming the economic aspirations of its students. The longer I taught in secondary schools, the more I wanted to know these things. I felt more and more that only if I did could I understand what my real function was; and not having any thorough and objective data to go on, I started to come to an understanding based perhaps too strongly on minor epiphanies: moments in which a gesture or a turn of phrase seemed to reveal the functioning design of the school.

One such moment occurred near the end of an academic year, at a banquet for the graduating seniors. I was sitting next to a very stylish girl who said she was going to Yale the following year, and from there to law school.

“Well,” I asked, “do you have any idea what kind of law you’re interested in?”

“Corporate, I guess.”

“Oh.”

"I guess I could get a job with Gulf, or something, in Africa."

I wondered aloud what a job like that is likely to entail. She smiled ravishingly. "Ripping off the natives," she said.

Although I have tried to discount that statement as merely an effort to tease or shock me, or as the cynicism of a single student, I have been unable to shake it off. It doesn't deny the intelligence and decency of teachers, or my own good moments in the profession. But I wonder how effective teachers can be against economic pressure — the pressure, for example, of maintaining a physical plant that attracts students not as directly to study as to an expensive style of life. I noticed this element in private schools again this summer, as I walked home to my dorm in the wet New England evenings, watching the students, too, heading to their dorms in couples and in batches of boys and girls, very cheerful, as we all should have been, among the elms and thick lawns, the clock on the belltower glowing calmly over us. I have thought, at times like that, that one thing this kind of school can stand for is an *élite* that is relatively open, and that is perhaps less callous than another, uneducated in art and music and a certain liberality, might have been. That is something I still believe. The notion that I give my life to it, however, is coupled to the frustration inherent for me in another image: the sight as I enter my dorm of a clearly lower-class boy kneeling in front of the Pepsi machine, his hand up the slot, looking away from me into the guilty faces of three or four upper-class kids. "Fahrout," he is saying; "they got these ecology cans in heah."

In lower-class Albuquerque there were more problems, but there was less social irony in their solution. I was under instructions, at one motel, simply to "keep those nigger kids outta the goddamn parking lot." That'll do it, all right. And for black adults the policy was almost equally simple: raise the room price a few dollars. In the barrio where I lived, things were even more naked than that. A man who complained too loudly about prices at the bar two doors down was shot four times in the chest by the proprietor, with a .38 calibre pistol at a range of seven or eight feet. A month later I spent a couple of hours on the floor, while two men with guns chased someone

around my backyard, blasting away, and once sending a ricochet through my window. I admit that I'd prefer a little bourgeois gentility to that, even, if need be, at the price of some hypocrisy. And I admit that most of the things that sustain me — my books and writing and photography, even the running that I used to do in school — are borrowed from my life as a student and as a teacher. I am still a very middle-class man. I had little to do with my neighbors in Albuquerque, most of whom hardly spoke to me. My real life, and happiness, is internal. It is derived from the literary and visual skills I used to teach, but it is removed from the world I used to live in. The great advantage of the world I live in now is that it directly displays the forces that created it. It is a Monument Valley of sorts, with its tequila ads and religious billboards and neon signs sticking up from the dust and asphalt. It is violent, but its violence is inevitable, and once in a while it has the logic and beauty of revelation. I don't know that I can communicate the spirit of such a moment, but I will try. It is the sort of thing that has made my life seem deeper and richer now than ever before.

Whenever it's possible, I like to run each day: it leaves me tingly, fit-feeling and more responsive to things. I have described my usual routine. One afternoon I came back past the Baptist Church and under the tequila sign with the blond in black velvet stretched out on it, and my neighbor's friends and relations were gathered around his blue Buick Skylark. The car was pulled up in front of our little adobe duplex, on a brown patch of dust, in a clutter of tools, near a broken-down station wagon that had a sticker on it saying "I've been there VIETNAM" and in which some children had set up a playhouse. Behind that there was a makeshift corral with a white horse in it, and a couple of steers. My friend Rose had apparently ridden out on her bike. She was sitting on the hood of the Skylark, a Bud in her hand. My neighbor had never wanted to talk with me, but he was paying full attention to Rose, who is tall, blond, and bosomy, like the twenty-foot-long woman in the tequila billboard that was right over her head — but Rose was wearing a T-shirt and lederhosen instead of black velvet.

That image is all I really mean to convey. I never saw anything like it around my quarters at prep-school, and it says more to me than all the green lawns and ivy-covered brick I can ever hope to see. It's true that I painted my apartment in Albuquerque just about the same way I had painted the one at school, and that I kept almost the same books and pictures on the walls. I had rugs and a stereo, given me by my family, or bought with my salary as a teacher. I'm glad to have all of that, as I am to have friends who are academics, or academic dropouts. I suppose that the new world I am trying to make for myself is going to have to be made with the knowledge, friendships and skills that I bring with me from my old one.

I remember Rose finally heading off on her battered bike at night, wobbling into the eddies of light and wind that cars make. Behind me, I imagine the light being on in the kitchen with its cheery yellow walls, and the blue-and-white table cloth. The books and pictures are in the living room. "Goodbye, teaching," I think, with surprising emphasis, considering that Rose really is just a friend. My neighbor grins, and we each go inside.

TRACKING

The woods look unmysterious from here:
Red maple, beech, and hemlock stand aside
And indiscriminately let the sky
And snow be background, foreground, hemisphere.

If there can be an opposite to sound —
An auditory whiteness, say — then we
Disturb it, break it, moving skeptically,
Expecting other absences. The ground

To our surprise, is laced with tracks; the floor
Is wild with evidence, the woods with clues.
Intruders and detectives, we will use
Our science, guesswork, intuition, lore.

We look at shape, configuration, size,
And guess at coyote, weasel, rabbit, squirrel.
We gauge direction; from straight lines, infer
A purpose, and from random tracks, surmise

Some indecision. Underneath this stump,
A mammal lived: excreting, holding still
And warm in maple leaves, so from a quill,
We guess a porcupine. And from a lump

Of just-regurgitated fur, we sense
A recent owl. Yet nothing moves or calls;
All animation's theoretical.
If anything, the silence grows more dense.

Yet undeniably, each separate trace
Is pointing toward a heart which beats against
Specific fur or feathers in a tense,
Particular, and private hollow place.

SUSAN GOODMAN CARLISLE

“Othello,” Robeson and *Another Country*

Why Teach?

CHRISTOPHER D. KIRKLAND

What makes a teacher run? Well, of a Thursday I had to think up, by the following Tuesday, a ten-week course based on “Othello.” A National Public Radio re-broadcast of “A Tribute to Paul Robeson” lingered on my conscience. I wanted to read some James Baldwin, one among the legion of important authors I knew only by reputation. A colleague, with the authority to match his error, informed me that Baldwin took his title *Another Country* from “Othello.” So I had it: Shakespeare’s “Othello,” America’s Paul Robeson and James Baldwin’s *Another Country*. Sounds good. Print it. Order the books. Leave the details, and reading the books, to the leisure of spring vacation. Then I began to doubt and to worry, to rationalize and to compensate. A friend kept encouraging me to pursue my instincts.

During the vacation I read the books, and by then I had seen the names of the students, many of them familiar to me, who had signed up for the course. I feigned confidence with the urgency of self-defense and the glee of prejudice, later so thoroughly disproved, of imagining how the likes of Ben VanMeter — that ersatz, hippie, skateboarding Kentucky Dutchman who had badly miscalculated in signing up for another ten-week stint with me — would shrink and cringe when he had to stomach both the homosexuality and the

inter-racial sexuality in Baldwin. I reacted with the vehemence of cowardice when a much and still esteemed colleague read *Another Country* at my suggestion and found it too trashy a novel for these kids, too prurient and superficial to support and sustain extensive comparison with Shakespeare or with Robeson.

I worried increasingly. The day I began I tried to hedge my bet, or perhaps to apologize, by tentatively and nervously reading from Tom Wolfe's "Radical Chic" about Leonard Bernstein's swish party for the Black Panthers. If I was leading my students to folly, I wanted them to know it.

And here they are, right in front of you, trucking on into the Bernstein's Chinese yellow duplex, amid the sconces, silver bowls full of white and lavender anemones, and uniformed servants serving drinks and Roquefort cheese morsels rolled in crushed nuts —

Who are these strange children here, right in front of me? What am I trying to do to them? With apprehension unabating, I played them the tape of that tribute to Paul Robeson; it sounded talky and take-my-word-for-it. The students were quiet, polite, veiling proper skepticism with all of the careful politics and decorum of a first class. I was more dubious than ever, and more forgiving. But six weeks later I stormed out of class when they fell into their media glaze and failed to take notes and listen aggressively when I again played the same tape.

We spent those six weeks, perhaps largely as a delaying tactic, examining "Othello" word by word. We read about 350 lines per assignment. Each student chose a twenty-line passage from each act to memorize and recite. We focused and intensified class discussion on those chosen passages. They wrote three conventional papers exclusively on "Othello": the development of a specific character, of their choosing, in the first two acts; a pattern of imagery evident in the first three acts; topics advanced, exchanged, and developed in seminar classes devoted exclusively to paper topics after we finished our careful reading of the entire play. Meanwhile, I respirationed the spirit of Paul Robeson by means fair and foul: I played passages from the Olivier-influenced Marlowe Society recording against the same passages from Robeson's recording — the

histrionics of frenzy set against the power of calm, such initial power expiring to a breath by line's end, every line thus an emblem for Robeson's life; I exploited the coincidence of the school's spring musical, "Cabaret," to justify a reading of Marie Seton's recollection of Robeson taunted, propositioned and roughed up by the brown-shirted, jackbooted stormtroopers in the Berlin bahnhof in December, 1934:

"I have never understood what fascism was before," he said. "I'll fight it wherever I find it from now on."

So we talked of fascism, and located it easily in "Othello."

We stretched figures from Shakespeare to our own ends, as when we read "Othello" I iii 133-144 ("Wherein I spoke of most disastrous chances . . .") as an allegory specifically and in each detail anticipating black emigration from Africa, and black enslavement and emancipation in America, to wit: ". . . of my redemption thence/ And portance in my travel's history . . ." The underground railroad, of course! ". . . anters vast and deserts idle . . ." The urban ghetto, naturally! And finally, those strangely provocative lines, coming as a near couplet to conclude a near sonnet almost seeming to cartoon the New Yorkers we were soon to meet in James Baldwin's America:

And of the Cannibals that each other eat,
The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
Grew beneath their shoulders.

We celebrated Robeson's birthday (April 9, 1898) by listening more closely, and with some earnest frustration at last, to six of his songs while sucking on the Sugar Daddies distributed during "There's a Man Goin' 'Round. . . ." We noticed how the naive poetry of Robeson's songs progressed during the selection toward political evangelism: "Water Boy," "Shenandoah," "Speed Bonny Boat," "There's a Man Goin' 'Round Takin' Names," "Did'n' My Lord Deliver Daniel," "Jacob's Ladder."

We frequently considered the passages from Shakespeare most popular with the students six or eight times over, listening to four or five students read (after they had written down the lines from

memory), then to the Marlowe Society, then to Robeson-Ferrer-Hagen and company. We took elements of each passage differently each time, often contradictorily:

If I do prove her haggard
Though that her jesses were my dear heartstrings,
I'd whistle her off and let her down the wind
To prey at fortune.

All that we knew, and everything we could figure or find out, about falconry but deepened a paradox about pride and cruelty, about kindness and possession and man's condescending praise for woman, that very attitude which Emilia so clearly articulated for us at the end of act four:

Why, we have galls, and though we have some grace,
Yet have we some revenge. Let husbands know
Their wives have sense like them. They see and smell
And have their palates both for sweet and sour,
As husbands have . . .
Then let them use us well. Else let them know
The ills we do, their ills instruct us so.

Or "Haply for I am black. . . ." The simple "Haply" which everyone understood so well at once came to mean something well beyond "maybe," and "by chance," and "happily," though it certainly meant all three.

O, 'tis the spite of hell, the fiend's arch-mock,
To lip a wanton in a secure couch,
And to suppose her chaste.

We talked of fellatio, and of the egocentricity of sinful behavior, and of the grace and arrogance of self-deception. That VanMeter fellow wryly memorized and recited Iago's "I lay with Cassio lately. . . ." Ann Strayer knew that "Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,/And love thee after" meant something other than ghoulish necro-sodomy, and she asked the class about it.

We imagined, as we listened to him read the lines, Robeson standing outside of the Federal District Court in Washington, D.C. in 1955 after he had failed in his suit for a U.S. passport:

I have done the state some service, and they know't.
No more of that. I pray you, in your letters,
When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
Speak of me as I am. Nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice.

By now, somewhat before we finished our methodic progress in class through "Othello," the students had looked through Robeson's *Here I Stand*; they found it disappointing prose and at best a slender resource held in common, something available and materially remindful. The best paper on the book analyzed the graphics of the cover design, and the students realized they would have to seek elsewhere for a sense of the man. Along the way they read "The Emperor Jones," the role which brought Robeson to O'Neill.

Armed with Dorothy Butler Gilliam's Robeson bibliography, the students attacked the problems of researching a systematically suppressed historical figure. They consulted the current Gilliam and Virginia Hamilton biographies, they listened to five Robeson recordings available in the Record Library, and they began to express some of the inclinations which I had hesitated to impose on them. They developed an anthology, kept on reserve in class as it grew and always available for reference, of papers on Paul Robeson. Eventually their anthology covered his background (the Harlem Renaissance, the history of the term "Jim Crow"), his life (his childhood, his professional career, him as a product of the Harlem Renaissance, as a self-professed world citizen, as a political patriot), his art (his voice and songs, the politics of his music, his stage roles generally and specifically, his film career), his political assertions (the politics of his roles, his speaking out for both democracy and socialism, the HUAC hearings, him as a victim of Cold War politics, his political self-destruction), his similarities to and differences from other well-known figures (Frederick Douglass, Walt Whitman, Billie Holiday, Martin Luther King, Jr.). Students read each of their Robeson papers in class as they began to read and discuss *Another Country*. "Why are we reading this?" Ann Strayer asked with her brutal honesty. By now I could snap: "Because you signed up for this course."

In his Robeson paper Dean Swan alerted us to the plausibility and extent of Robeson's legally astute theatricality as, blacklisted elsewhere, he tried to grandstand himself at the House Un-American Activities Committee. We reconsidered the transcripts, and the negligent VanMeter began to develop a notion of Robeson as a court jester and political fool. We talked about the power and the futility of art and politics. As I shuttled ideas from one section to the other, each was convinced that the other was brighter and more interesting; I was getting far too much credit for the profusion and quality of ideas.

Many of the Robeson papers were extremely and conveniently late, for reasons good and bad. The readings ran right through our *Another Country* assignments and discussion. Entirely unperturbed that Baldwin uses vivid and unconventional sex as much as Shakespeare uses iambic pentameter, students again and again expressed and demonstrated that they were reading Baldwin deeply and richly as a result of their prolonged consideration of Shakespeare. They developed topics and wrote papers on Baldwin which manifested, even and especially in mechanics and writing style but also in attitude and approach to literature, a quantum advance which writing drills had never so quickly and completely accomplished in my classes. They discussed Shakespeare's play, Robeson's life and Baldwin's novel with a free and comprehensive reference to detail and with intriguing association. For example, they discovered that Baldwin's description of New York, as Eric sees it, describes with some irony the Venice of Shakespeare's "Othello:"

It was a city without oases, run entirely, insofar at least as human perception could tell, for money; and its citizens seemed to have lost entirely any sense of their right to renew themselves.

Together, we developed the concept of the novel as a Manhattan *Odyssey*, comparing Baldwin's heroes, taxi-riding across the Island's grey rock and making contact points to water, to Odysseus, rafting around the Mediterranean making contact points with land. For the next to last class students sought out those familiar elements from "Othello" which their reading of Baldwin might influence radically.

Where and how, act by act, does Baldwin's "Do you love me?" motif appear in "Othello"? How do the Rufus-Leona motives, set as they are by Baldwin, enlighten those of Othello and Desdemona which Shakespeare sets against the voices of authority: Brabantio, Duke and the First Senator in I iii 76-295? Are there any voices of authority in Baldwin's New York City? How do several of the sustained dialogues in *Another Country* reveal radically different interpretations to the succinct Iago-Cassio dialogue at II iii 258-335? In a re-reading of act four, might not a self-contemptuous Othello, the very man who was so clear sighted about Iago in act one, insist upon Iago as the instrument of his self-destruction? Bored in the first months of retirement, uneasily reflective and therefore equally susceptible to Desdemona's attentions and the prospect of battle with the Turks, might not he, just like Baldwin's Rufus Scott hell bent on suicide, be aggressively spoiling for his own demise? A twenty-minute fancy found sudden credence in a poetically logical extension of the next three lines we read, Iago's curiously suggestive diagnosis:

The lethargy must have its quiet course.
If not, he foams at mouth, and by and by
Breaks out to savage madness. Look, he stirs.

So we recalled Watts. We talked about, and the students pursued in their writing, the play's atmosphere of arid despair accentuated by the culturally starved, commercial, bellicose Venice in ironic contrast to the more hopeful *Another Country*, where Eric, then Yves, slouches in a jet headed "Toward Bethlehem" (Baldwin's title for the last part of his novel). This Bethlehem is a New York where nearly everybody we meet is somehow involved in the arts. Champagne Lucy Schulte, daughter of a painter and a publisher and toast of the Big Apple, studied Cass' taxi rides and concluded that a Yellow Cab was a liberal woman's most liberating environment. Desdemona tried to use Othello as her Yellow Cab, someone quipped.

We traced Baldwin's more explicit allusions and briefly considered passages from Henry James, Joseph Conrad and William Butler Yeats, among others. Baldwin might well wince at Kim May-

wald's vigorous pursuit of the intricate associations between Baldwin's Book Three and Yeats' "The Second Coming": Yves' glittering jet turns and turns "in the widening gyre" of a holding pattern over Idlewild Airport. That paper brought to fruition a genre of papers begun early in the trimester, when Ned Bent carried literary analysis and his extraordinary mathematical expertise to a logical absurdity while analyzing mathematical imagery in an act-one exchange between Iago and Cassio. He ended by reducing Cassio to algebraic formulae.

We went further afield and looked into current periodicals to apply and extend our perspectives. We read in class Mark Falcoff's harsh attack on the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda in the *Commentary* review of Neruda's recently published *Memoirs*:

That Neruda expected his private person to be judged by his public morals, is clear enough. What is far less clear, however, is whether these morals as revealed in these autobiographical pages, are worthy of praise.

With that we took Othello and Robeson further to task, and we realized that by the end of his novel of multiple heroes, Baldwin has made a major, fully and conventionally sympathetic hero out of Eric, a man instantly repulsive by almost all of our accepted values. An overweight, aging, rootless, bi-sexual, expatriated, out-of-work, small-time actor prostituting himself for the slim chance of a tawdry, commercial comeback, Eric was at least ten things, any one of which would get any student in the class disowned. Yet we came to admire Eric while we wrestled with doubts about the noble Moor and the once-and-deposed All American, Robeson of Rutgers.

We read Milicent Bell's celebration in *The New Republic* of *Hard Labor* by the Italian poet Cesare Pavese, who translated Whitman into Italian. She notes that Pavese has chosen "to converse with peasants, working men and women, sand-diggers, prostitutes, convicts and kids."

"Pavese was arrested," writes Bell, "on a vague charge of 'anti-fascist activities' when the journal of which he was an editor was suppressed in 1935, and he spent seven months of *confino* in a Cala-

brian village." The students knew something of Whitman, a major figure in a course which some of them had taken in the previous trimester, and they were quick to draw some accurate parallels, and to reflect again on one of Robeson's briefer roles, the chain gang, hammer-ringing convict singing for relief while castigating capitalists in the song "Water Boy:"

You rob my pocket
Yes you rob my pocket
You done rob my pocket
Of silver and gold.

We had come to see the more complex meaning of simpler things. We left relatively unpursued an association between Robeson and the Spanish poet Garcia Lorca, and we never got far with the startling notion of Hemingway vis-à-vis Robeson, two contrary Americans vigorously involving themselves in the Spanish revolution. We listened to Vachel Lindsay rant and rave his way through "The Congo." Many of the students had been introduced to the poem two years earlier, but it was now a much different, more difficult, clever and meaningful work. We were now alert to Lindsay's self-humiliating sarcasm as he presents two of white America's stereotypical misconceptions in "A Study of the Negro Race:" blacks as savages or as jiveass saints. Now we understood more clearly Lindsay's closing assurance that a white crusade has Bible beaten blacks into the Christian conformity which Baldwin symbolically expresses with Rufus Scott's mother-of-pearl coffin. Baldwin made Lindsay's lines all the more convincing:

And only the vulture dared again
By the far lone mountains of the moon
To cry, in the silence, the Congo tune:

The last two classes kneaded our more pliant brains into new and protean shapes. Finally, the exam. Ben VanMeter, for example, knew already that he was fated to an unsatisfactory grade in the course for not writing on Robeson's self-destruction-via-politics in time to offer his paper to the rest of the class. But he wrote soundly, for its own sake, a comprehensively informed, accurate, personal, ob-

jective, venturesome and funny paper which began modestly and included a personal footnote on its second page:

My great grandparents owned a rather large farm and many slaves. My morals are somewhat old fashioned, influenced by my grand mother, a flag carrying Confederate.

Ben's admirable and moving examination essay gathered force and clarity as he wrote it, and at the end he arrived at as simple, original and poignant an idea as describing Robeson as "a secret hero for the caring." He left the exam exuberant, and not much caring if he had passed or failed the course. In her paper Starlene Bethel described Iago as a hero of wit. Dean Swan wrote a high honors final about the course's black heroes and generalized them all as men sensitive to honor and dignity who all ended as "victims of delusion."

Reading the final examinations settled the last of my qualms. The thoughts and sensitivities by so far exceeded whatever I might have had to say during the course, whatever I might have anticipated, that it felt silly to think of myself as an instructor. More hopefully, I felt the privilege of presuming to friendship with twenty-seven kids. Helping to provide the circumstances whereby they could come to their own terms with Shakespeare, Robeson and Baldwin satisfied me deeply. I cherished our mutual enlightenment, and said to myself: "And I get paid for this?" Just what is it, I wondered with momentarily sincere idealism, what is it beyond the inadequacies of wealth and clout, which sustains virtually all of my school and college friends in business, or law, or even in medicine? What compensates them for the humanity and humility of teaching? How do they go about tapping an equally rich and vital reserve? I, thirty-five years of age and in perfect health, declare myself a teacher. And there's a chance that, in another time and circumstance, it could all happen again.



ARTHUR HOUSIANITIS

The Evolution of a Teacher

A Combination of Two Cultures

DOROTHY M. ANDREWS

Looking out from the biology laboratory window this early morning on the first day of school, I marvel once again at the splendor of a September morning in New England. The honey locust tree — a mere sapling when I first began teaching at this small Massachusetts high school — now towers above the tall laboratory windows. Last June, the creamy drooping racemes were covered with honeybees and the intense fragrance drifted through the windows; now, the role of the honeybee long since accomplished, the flowers have developed into smooth, horny pods.

The final stage in the life-cycle of the tree, I muse, is but the beginning of a new school year for me. For a teacher, the fall brings a chance to begin again — to avoid the mistakes of yesteryear, to experiment with new ideas and to resolve once again to become a better teacher.

Voices and footsteps mar my brief reverie. I turn from the window and survey the room. The stars and stripes hanging limply in the still atmosphere and the energetic entering students in colorful shirts and sturdy blue jeans are as American as the native locust tree I watched grow over the years.

In a flash of memory I am transported backwards over three decades in time and across an ocean in space. Again, I am looking out of a laboratory window on a damp, windy first day of school. The stocky, quiet lads dressed in sombre school uniforms are as English

as the gnarled oaks I gaze at through the window. King George VI from his framed vantage point on the opposite wall appears to survey the scene thoughtfully. He sees me, a beginning teacher, newly graduated from one of Yorkshire's redbrick Universities, facing my first class in a fen country grammar school. It was a grammar school in the traditional British sense — a school for boys only. Its sole goal was to prepare students for the Higher School Certificate examination, the "open sesame" to a University education. Traditionally, teachers in the grammar schools were men, but because these were the devastating years of World War II, I had the distinction of being the first woman to teach science in the history of the school.

Across the river Nene and merging with the handsome Georgian Houses stretching along the brink was the High School — a secondary school for girls — the counterpart of the grammar school, but staffed by women. These two schools were completely separate institutions; combined activities were never encouraged.

Thus, the school in which I found myself in the role of a teacher was, with one exception, like the grammar school from which I had graduated only four years earlier. The one exception was that the grammar school in which I was a student was mixed, that is, coeducational. This situation was not based upon any philosophical truths but upon the sheer practicality of economics. Yarm, an ancient town in the North Riding of Yorkshire, and nestled in a loop of the river Tees, was where I attended school. At the age of five I entered the council school, a stark Victorian edifice forever in the shadow of the vast viaduct which has spanned the town since 1851. My memories of this era of school although hazy are far from happy ones. The elementary school was considered to be a separate stage in the dual process of education. The "cane" was used frequently; its sharp sting across the upper part of my palm is still remembered. Elementary education, which was free, provided an education through the school-leaving age of fourteen. The dreaded eleven plus examination loomed like a shadow as I approached the "magic age," for my failure to pass this test would exclude me forever from obtaining a secondary education. In the early thirties the British system assured a higher education for either talented individuals or a

privileged minority only. To this day I can recall the relief I felt when the examination results were announced.

Thus, in September, 1933 I earned the privilege of attending the ancient Grammar School at Yarm. Although the school's original foundation charter bears the seal of Queen Elizabeth I and is dated the seventh of July, 1590, I attended the "new" Grammar School built in 1884 about a mile from the riverside site of the original building. How proud I was to wear the black gym tunic, white blouse and long, black, itchy stockings which comprised the school's basic uniform. The black velour winter hats and white summer panamas were embroidered with the school badge and the school motto — "Perseverando"! The students came from the outlying villages and isolated farms as well as from Yarm. Even though the school drew from a widespread rural area, relatively few children passed the eleven plus hurdle. In 1935 the school had about a hundred and fifty students, a headmaster and ten "assistant masters and mistresses." Hence it was the small size of the student body that established the school as a mixed (coeducational) school. For the next six years my life was ruled by the pressures of homework and examinations. Weekends and social commitments were arranged around homework schedules, and I soon learned the necessity of placing duty before pleasure, or doing what I had to do rather than what I wanted to do. Extracurricular activities were minimal, the sports program consisting of field hockey in the winter and tennis in the summer. Matches were held with area secondary schools only on Saturday mornings.

The names of the Elizabethan benefactors were perpetuated by the three Houses into which the school was divided. The House to which I was assigned, Flounders, engaged in interhouse competition in sports and drama with the other two houses, Conyers and Chalmers. But there was constant pressure to achieve academically since in the first place it was a great privilege to attend the school and also it entailed parental sacrifice as a secondary education was not free. The fees were three guineas a quarter, a considerable sum of money when the average wage was about three pounds a week. In addition to this basic fee all textbooks had to be purchased as well as the compulsory school uniforms.

Lessons, largely taught by lecture, dictation and rote memorization, were dull and pedantic. There was, however, one subject area in which the teaching was inspiring, imaginative and creative and, as I reflect on it now, well ahead of its time. The sciences were completely laboratory centered and would do credit to the current nationally developed curricula. Also the two science masters were gifted teachers, and I was thus captivated by science. I clearly remember a Form One chemistry laboratory in which I made table salt by neutralizing hydrochloric acid and sodium hydroxide. The crystals which remained after evaporation were a "dirty purple" shade caused by the presence of litmus used as the indicator. I carried home in my hand the sample I had prepared for use at the dinner table! Botany classes were invariably held outdoors. Groups of school children, Vasculums slung over their shoulder, were a common sight collecting specimens in the meadows, along the river banks and under the hedgerows.

At age fifteen upon completing the fifth form, I took a national examination, the School Leaving Certificate. After passing this examination, I chose to remain at the grammar school and prepare for the Higher School Certificate Examination, which would qualify me for University entrance. The courses of study during my last two years at the grammar school were quite narrow. At this point I had to decide whether I was going to be on the "science side" or the "arts side." Unhesitatingly, I chose the "science side" and studied only four subjects — mathematics, biology, chemistry and English literature. My last day at school was just like any other day — no fanfare or ceremonies — just a few farewells to favorite teachers.

I don't think I ever consciously chose to become a teacher. If a secondary education was available only to a talented minority, then even fewer people could aspire to a University education unless they belonged to the "upper class." Class structure in England was rigid and uncompromising. To succeed one had to be either affluent or knowledgeable. Scholarships to the University were available, and I was fortunate enough to be awarded a Board of Education Scholarship which stipulated that the recipient must agree "to teach for a period of at least three years."

And thus I eventually found myself at the teacher's desk in a fen country Grammar School in wartime England. I would expect to be a strong disciplinarian, an authoritarian figure and a dispenser of facts as my teachers before me had been. This task was my response to King and Country — my personal contribution to the war effort — a duty which would not be shirked. Morally, as well as academically, I knew what was expected of me.

At precisely nine o'clock each school morning the student body would assemble in the hall in rigid rows, black-robed teachers seated at the front and the headmaster, bible in hand, erect before the lectern. The scene had changed but little since my own grammar school days. Each day began with a crescendo of schoolboy voices singing lustily the great English hymns: "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun"; "Fight the good fight with all thy might"; and on a green spring morning the words of "We plow the fields and scatter the good seed on the land. . . ." wafted over the freshly tilled fields of the fertile East Anglian farms. Oh yes, we all, students and teachers, knew that England expected us "to do our duty."

After the war and my subsequent marriage to a native New Englander, I migrated to the United States. Following a period of adjustment to the new culture and to a different system of values, I decided to return to teaching. I was amazed to learn I was not qualified for certification as a teacher in an American high school. I was quite stunned — wasn't the biochemistry of photosynthesis, the principles of Darwinian evolution and the atomic theory of matter the same here as in England? If I had been a history teacher or a social studies teacher then, I reasoned, this might have been a legitimate request, but not for a science teacher! There was no way out of the predicament but to return to college. Hence, I enrolled in the School of Education at Boston University to complete the courses necessary for certification in Massachusetts. As it happened this was a serendipitous situation since at Boston University I was to meet two professors who opened for me completely new avenues of thought. Dr. John G. Read, professor of science education, helped me develop alternate ways of teaching to supplement the more formal methodology I had learned in England; and Dr.

Franklin Roberts, professor of sociology, made me explore the question I had never thought of before — Why not education for everyone? Now, it was quite clear why the State Department of Education had required my return to college: the educational philosophies of England and the United States were completely different. If I were to survive and succeed as a teacher in an American public high school, I would have to evolve a new way of thinking about the process of education. I earned a master's degree in education before I felt confident enough to enter an American classroom.

And that was how I found myself one September morning sitting at a desk in the classroom of an American public high school. That was nearly two decades ago. I am not the same teacher today as when I first faced American students. I believe that my style of teaching is the result of a synthesis of the two cultures which have influenced my life. Today, I am much more concerned with how students think, how they make decisions and how they discriminate, than I am with a vast array of facts they have memorized. The core of my teaching seems now to focus upon such intangibles as values, attitudes and aesthetics. For all the drawbacks of English education between the two world wars these intangibles were subtly developed in spite of the seeming stress upon cognitive learning. When I first began teaching in America, it was obvious that this dimension was lacking; there was nothing akin to the "old school tie" type of school spirit with its attendant attitudes and values.

It was also soon apparent that teaching in America was far more difficult and challenging than teaching in an English Grammar School. Respect had to be earned through efficient and challenging teaching.

What are my goals today, and how have I evolved as a teacher spanning two cultures? When I arrived here three decades ago, I read widely about the country. My knowledge of the United States had been, in part, limited to Hollywood's interpretation of American life. A book I read at that time had a great impact on me. It expressed an idea I had not encountered before by a contemporary native writer. The book, *A Sand County Almanac*, by conservationist

Aldo Leopold made an eloquent plea to Americans to develop “an ecological conscience” — the consideration of ethical principles when ecological situations were being evaluated. In the two and a half decades since I became aware of this ethic, the term ‘ecology’ has become a household word. Not only Americans but all mankind has witnessed an unparalleled assault upon the earth’s fragile ecosystem. This idea formed the foundation of my new philosophy of education in general and of biology in particular. I now believe that a key goal of education should be to provide direction in modifying attitudes toward the environment in an effort to improve environmental decision-making and thus to enhance the quality of all life. My early goals as a biology teacher were relatively clear and simplistic. Now they are inextricably involved with attitudes, values and ethics, areas which have been all too often neglected in our schools. However, it is this aspect of teaching with its emphasis upon meeting behavioral objectives primarily in the affective domain that underlies my teaching strategies. I view my role as a teacher with a missionary’s zeal. The prime value that directs and gives purpose to my teaching is man’s relationship to nature, his interaction with all the organisms in the biosphere. My responsibility as a biology teacher must be to convey the concept that man is part of and not apart from nature.

In the transition from an English grammar school teacher to an American school teacher, I studied, for the first time, the numerous writings of John Dewey, who explained this same idea admirably in numerous writings, but especially in *Nature and Experience*. Because it is a complex idea, requiring a new way of thinking about the world, it is quite difficult to convey to students and has made, therefore, heavy demands upon my teaching practices.

The classroom teacher has both the most important task in the world and at the same time the most difficult. I never cease to be frustrated by the attitudes of some parents and other laity that teaching is easy, a “snap.” Teaching in its fullest sense involves exceedingly complex procedures and many interacting components demanding a multidimensional approach.

More recently, my teaching has been influenced by the writings

of human ecologist Garrett Hardin. It was at the National Association of Biology Teachers' (NABT) annual convention in October 1974 that I first became aware of Hardin's philosophy. In a stirring address he called upon biology teachers to deal with the problem of how to accept limits. I was highly receptive to this idea because I remembered how appalled I had been at the many examples of waste and extravagance I had observed when I first came to America. I remembered his warning. "We are," he said, "at the end of two hundred years of domination by the idea of progress." Again, this idea implies the necessity of replacing current values with new ones based on the idea that limits, especially in crucial areas, are unavoidable. I have attempted to present these ideas by dealing primarily with problems with which the students are most familiar, that is, with local problems, especially those concerned with land management. To focus on local problems requires contribution from townspeople who are knowledgeable about and actively involved in such problems. My own efforts as a teacher have been supplemented by bringing people from the community into the classroom. Some of these involvements include such topics as a member of the Conservation Commission discussing the wetlands act, an international conservationist discussing a film he made, or representatives from the local branch of the League of Women Voters discussing the energy dilemma. Students are also encouraged and assisted in a study of a problem in which they have a particular interest.

To summarize my creed as a biology teacher: I believe students should become aware of the nature of the living world of which they are a part, that they should gain an appreciation of the complexity and uncertainty of the scientific process, and that they be encouraged to attain the kind of inquiring mind and the reasoning skills necessary for the survival of the planet.

Teaching is a profession which suits me. During the course of the day my energies are spent helping people, building up confidence where there is doubt, knowledge where there is ignorance, stretching young minds to their limits.

Is teaching in the fullest sense then really possible in today's high school, or are we on the threshold of a new era? I think perhaps

this new era will see the development of international educational goals as outlined in the Belgrade Charter so that current narrow goals will be extended beyond our national boundaries and will embrace a truly universal education. Should this someday happen, then, whatever tree might be growing outside my laboratory window, I would know how to teach the students there.

The teacher's preoccupation with the future is beautifully expressed by anthropologist Loren Eiseley:¹

Yet the teacher is fighting for an oncoming future, for something that has not emerged, which may, in fact, never emerge. His lot is worse than that of the sculptors in snow, which Sydney Hook once described us as being. Rather, the teacher is a sculptor of the intangible future. There is no more dangerous occupation on the planet, for what we conceive as our masterpiece may appear out of time to mock us — a horrible caricature of ourselves.

¹ Loren Eiseley, *The Night Country*. London: The Garnstone Press Limited, 1971, p. 200.

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*SWAN LAKE REHEARSAL
AT THE BALLET SCHOOL*

Loren is the careful bird,
middle-sized and twelve years
well-proportioned. Someday
(sooner than her elders like to think)
she'll glide with a flock
of teenaged schoolgirls.
Later she will, almost certainly,
marry and mother.
Pretty, she is not beautiful,
and though she makes the fewest errors,
she is unremarkable in every other way.

Heide has the face of a darling,
everyone's sweetheart.
Watch her as she lifts her slender neck,
tips her chin, and smiles.
Trying to please, she doesn't see
what you see:
her tender fingers freezing into twigs.

Sarah will never be a dancer,
though her legs and back are the strongest.
She is far too bright
and talks for attention,
tossing off glints in every direction
from her braces and wire-rimmed glasses.
And yet, if dance were pure body,
Sarah would take flight.

Despite the white flutter of her costume,
Rachel will not become a swan.
Doe-skinned, she moves like a baby doe,
testing her legs against ground,
and is pleased.
When you call "Rachel,"
she looks up, ready to obey.
Other times, she forgets you, the mirrors,
even the music.
Then Rachel is a curling fern,
turning into itself for light.

MARCIA FALK

The English Teacher as Metaphorist:

An Interdisciplinary Note

FRANK L. RYAN

The question of the unity of the world, of the connection between frogs and fronds, butterflies and buttresses, natural laws and the "laws" of rhetoric is a scientific concern. But the metaphorical unity of the world within literature, frog used to refer to the dark side of man's nature and butterfly to suggest the transient qualities of his searches, is a literary concern. Beyond this there is still another way of seeing the metaphorical unity of the world, one which poses the structure of a poem as frog-like, the sentence as a magnetic field, the behavior of cells a reflection of the advances and recessions of literary figures within a plot. This also may be a literary concern and, more generally, a concern of the English teacher. For if, as the scientist-naturalist Loren Eiseley tells us, theory is a net to catch the world, then metaphor is the force which unites it. To be metaphorical in the way I have suggested is to be interdisciplinary. Such an interdisciplinary approach suggests that we ransack science, and other areas, for instances which will serve as part of a metaphor, the other part of which is any event proper to English studies. The teacher functions as teacher-guide in defining metaphors, in discovering their presence in literature and in tracing their structural value in discourse. The teacher functions as teacher-poet in creating metaphors which will clarify English studies and, hopefully, the studies from which part of the metaphors are drawn. In the first instance the teacher is *within* literature, a poem, an essay,

a novel, a sentence, probing for what makes the thing work, metaphorically or any other way. In the second instance the teacher is outside these things, wandering through somewhat alien lands in a search for events and objects which will lead to such statements as A sentence is like a magnetic field, or See how the structure of a plot is similar to the structure of a leaf. If at times the results seem strained, forced, take comfort from Samuel Johnson's definition of Wit, a major organizing force in his theory of poetry. It is worth quoting here.

But Wit, abstracted from its effects upon the hearer, may be more vigorously and philosophically considered as a kind of *discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. Of Wit, thus defined, they (the metaphysical poets) have more than enough. The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together, nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions . . .

I like that idea of yoking by violence seemingly dissimilar ideas and things even though I realize that Johnson himself fretted over it. The idea suggests that if we are going to experience a unified world (and do not interdisciplinary studies imply a unified world?) then we had better become poets and express that unity through metaphors. With this in mind I would like now to present a few examples of the kind of associations which can be made between English studies and science.

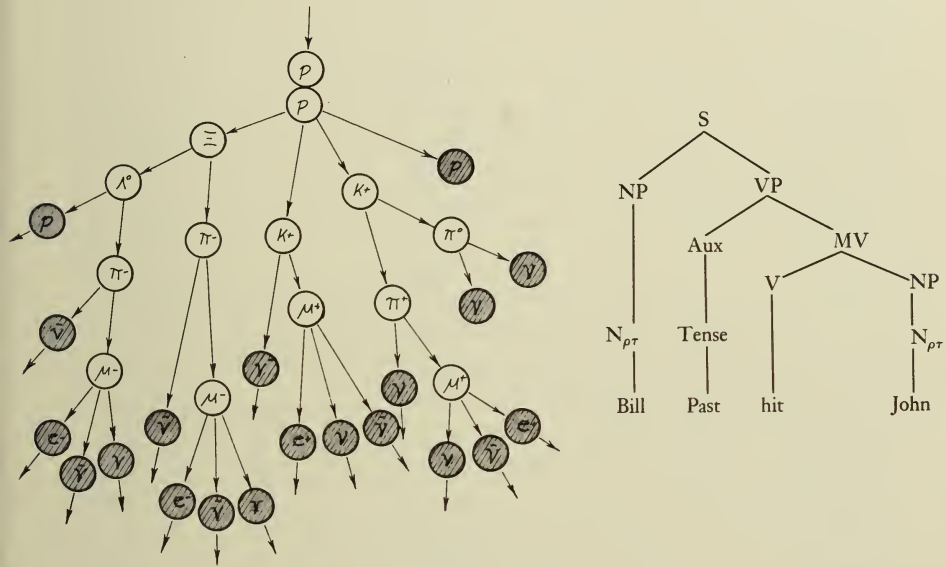
Literary people cherish the notion that a work is inexhaustible in its meanings, that it eludes our most energetic efforts to pin it down. It was a quality about which the New Critics had much to say, none more forcefully, or more often, than Cleanth Brooks in his efforts to attribute to literature a value beyond that of science. In his essay "The Heresy of Paraphrases" after warning us that we should not be misled by "the heresy of paraphrases," he makes a distinction between scientific language and poetic language. The former consists of "abstract symbols" which are "not to be warped into new meanings," while the latter has "a potential of meaning." Any statement within a poem "will always show itself as deflected away from a positive, straightforward formulation." Science, how-

ever, cannot always be as straightforward as Brooks would have it, and one could create a metaphor by comparing the inexhaustibility of the poem to the uncertainty principle in quantum mechanics. Rice and Teller assure us in *The Structure of Matter* that though it is possible to fix the position of an electron with any desired accuracy, "such a state will not correspond to the lowest or fundamental state of the atom. Even if we start from the fundamental state and carry out a determination of the position of the electron, the measurement itself will perturb the system to be measured, and at the end of the experiment we will have an electron with a definite position but with an energy much greater than that of the fundamental state." To put it another way: In physics the determination of the position of a particle is achieved by bouncing light off the particle. This bouncing, however, alters the position in such a way that the object and its position and velocity have little relationship to its previous condition. This slippery condition (something of a metaphor in that statement) is comparable, in turn, to the behavior of words when a poet goes to work. Words seem solid, manageable, even measurable, until the poet begins to use them and then, as T. S. Eliot points out,

Words strain,

Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
Will not stay still.

But to go on. Even a rudimentary approach to generative grammar invites a comparison between the generation of a simple sentence and a phenomenon in physics. As a sentence is generated, more specialized forms are revealed at succeeding levels of generation. In physics the shower of particles produced by the collision of a high energy proton with a nucleus in the upper atmosphere leads to a condition in which only the last generation of electrons and neutrons is stable. In each process there is a refinement in time which is striking in the graphic representation.



Consider an even more daring, or, as Johnson would have it, a more violent yoking in comparing a tragic play to a biological occurrence. In biology successive consolidation occurs in slime mold when single cell organisms, upon their numbers reaching a critical level, stream together to form a corporate structure adapted to repopulation. In a tragic play like *King Lear* relationships are relatively closely knit at the opening, become separate (individual) in time, and ultimately flow together (achieve a resolution) in a tragic climax and then in a serene closing designed to achieve a new population. This metaphor also lends itself to graphic representation.

Life cycle of slime mold is depicted schematically. Free-living amoebas (far left) aggregate to form a slimy slug (left center). Slug moves about as if it were a single organism, then settles down and produces a fruiting body (right). Eventually fruiting body releases spores, each of which develops into a single amoeba.



The play:

Beginning

Lear and daughters
Lear and Kent
Gloucester and sons

United →

Gradually Later

Lear vs. daughters
Lear vs. Kent
Cordelia vs. other daughters
Gloucester vs. sons
Edmund vs. Edgar

Separated
(Free-Living)

Lear-Cordelia
Lear-Kent
Gloucester-Edgar
Edmund-Edgar

“Streaming together”

Cordelia-husband
Edgar
Kent

A new community

Conclusion

What of a metaphorical relationship between a comic play like *She Stoops to Conquer* and a process familiar to botanists, photosynthesis? Both are processes in which their elements move from disorder to order. In the play the action moves from the confusion created by mistaken identities and practical jokes to the order of proper identities and the restoration of common sense. In photosynthesis there is the ordering of disordered elements, the process or manufacture of energy-containing organic compounds from the raw materials as brought about by green plants when exposed to light.

Consider the possibilities of a metaphorical relationship between a literary work and models in science. In *Patterns of Discovery* the physicist N. R. Hanson points out that James Clerk Maxwell constructed models of the aether out of coil springs and leather strips. And he quotes another physicist, "I never satisfy myself until I can make a mechanical model of a thing. If I can make a mechanical model I can understand it. As long as I cannot make a mechanical model all the way through, I cannot understand it. . . ." And that statement recalls that Enrico Fermi, the Nobel Prize physicist, used all kinds of handy material (cartons, bulbs, blocks, etc.) to construct models for the enlightenment of his students. Formalists to the contrary, I do not think it an abasement of a literary work to view it as a model comprised of its own cartons, bulbs, blocks, and conveying something not readily understood otherwise. Imagine Shakespeare, or Faulkner, or Hemingway saying, Until I create this model, this work, I cannot understand what I have seen in this world and I cannot show you what I have seen in this world. What is a parable by Christ but a literary work which serves as a model for a moral vision. How does light behave, we ask the scientist, and he replies, Let me create a model for you. Who is my neighbor, someone asks of Christ, and he replies, Let me tell you a story about a Samaritan. What does the world do to people, we might have asked of Hemingway, and he replies, Let me tell about a man named Frederic Henry and a woman named Catherine Barkley.

In all of these examples I recognize limitations. Certainly, such metaphorical relationships are apt to be brittle, though I don't know

of any metaphor which is not brittle to some degree. Additionally such an approach cannot be a particularly large portion of lectures, discussions and assignments if only because English teachers have a busy time keeping up with their own discipline. What I am urging is that all those who are engaged in interdisciplinary activities and those who wonder about such activities be aware of the hypothesis that underlies them, namely, that we live in a unified world. I assume that when a teacher of political science and a teacher of economics join each other and their classes to form an interdisciplinary effort, they perceive a unified world. And I assume that they are determined to prove that political and economic forces have common causes and similar effects upon human lives. In this sense both become historians, pointing out to their classes (and, one hopes, to each other) that human culture has one root even though the growth from that root may be cut into sections and given names like history, economics, political science, philosophy, and so forth. Such activities are fine, but I am urging that teachers not only perceive but *create* a unity in the world, a unity which poetry itself projects. To see God in a grain of sand. What is this but a statement attesting to the unity of the world? And a profound statement. Possibly the occasions on which such metaphors will be used would be rare. No matter. What is important is that we remain alert to such possibilities, that we be aware that in the *seemingly* alien lands of other disciplines there are flashes of light by which we can determine positions in our discipline with more depth, more vitality. Is a sentence in any way like the lines of a magnetic field? Is the structure of a leaf suggestive of the structure of a poem? Does the second law of thermodynamics invite a comparison to the expenditure of energy by characters in a tragic play? Is the plan by which Iago traps Othello actually like a spider's web? Read a handbook of botany. Browse through a beginner's text on physics. Look at something through a microscope. Become a metaphorist. Become a teacher-poet.



Webster, Van Buren, and Teaching

Discipline and Creativity

DONALD B. COLE

When Daniel Webster arrived at Phillips Exeter in 1796, he was far from being the self-assured orator of later years. Only fourteen, sent off to school because he was too sickly to work on the farm, poorly dressed and ill-mannered, he had a miserable time in his first days at the Academy. As he had at home, Webster sat for dinner with both fists clutching knife and fork amid the derision of his scornful classmates. The greatest ordeals for the homesick boy were those frequent occasions on which he was required to recite formally in class. He would have given up and returned to the security of his home had it not been for the help of Benjamin Abbot and Joseph Stevens Buckminster. The stern demanding Abbot, first principal instructor of the Academy, insisted that Webster satisfy the requirements of the school. A fellow student, Buckminster, only twelve but already a brilliant scholar, encouraged the older boy and helped him with his work.¹ With this support, Webster stuck to his task, completed his studies and went on to Dartmouth, the law, Congress and immortality.

Some years later at another school, Berkshire Gymnasium in Massachusetts, another little boy, Smith Van Buren, twelve years old, was also having a miserable time. Like Webster, Smith had been sent off to boarding school, in this case because his widowed

¹ Claude Fuess, *Daniel Webster* (Boston, 1930), I, pp. 33-37.

father, Martin Van Buren, was too busy as Secretary of State to care for his youngest son. Instead of wanting to give up like Webster, young Van Buren reacted defiantly and was punished severely. When President Andrew Jackson read Smith Van Buren's account of the incident, Jackson reacted with characteristic spirit:

What a gem! Cherish it, never let a bloom of it be withered by oppression, change his position, unless the Superintendent *atones* for the punishment of innocence, — for who can *doubt the candor* when he 'swears to the *Bible*,' I would not take a *million* for such a *son*, and I protest against permitting his *high sense* of honor and *propriety* from being subdued into abject servility, by New England despotism — take him away, and send him to Nashville, or educate him here.²

But in spite of Jackson, Smith took his punishment, completed his studies at Berkshire and went on to a successful legal career.

One point of these stories is that studying and teaching at a boarding school was no easier then than now. Like students today, Webster found it difficult to adjust to his new environment. Like teachers today, Abbot and Buckminster had a difficult time drawing the best out of their pupil. Like many students sent away to school, Smith Van Buren defied authority. And the unfortunate Superintendent of Berkshire Gymnasium had to put up with criticism from a father and the boy's highly placed patron. Yet despite these difficulties, both students and teachers persevered and society eventually benefitted.

Webster's experience provides a commentary on one of the obstacles facing teachers today. Teachers often complain that they cannot both counsel and discipline, that they cannot both teach and correct. Counselling and teaching, they say, demand cooperation and friendship, which are damaged when the teacher must also discipline. Some go further and say that teachers ought not to criticize or insist on fact and form, because such insistence frustrates the student, inhibiting creativity. Better, they say, to leave

² Andrew Jackson to Martin Van Buren, Nov. 15, 1830, John S. Bassett and J. Franklin Jameson, eds., *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson* (Washington, D.C., 1926-1935), IV, p. 205.

the student alone, give him confidence and let him set his own standards. Yet note that Abbot insisted that Webster do what was expected of him while Buckminster encouraged the unhappy student to do his work. Abbot and Buckminster both disciplined and encouraged; neither found the one incompatible with the other. And Webster needed both.

The argument that discipline interferes with creativity is also weak, for it is impossible to separate the former from the latter. The artist, for example, must combine his genius with disciplined skills and techniques. Leonardo Da Vinci, for example, had genius, but he also knew precise measurements of all parts of the human body.

The interrelationship between discipline and creativity is inherent in the writing and study of history. Since the historian must re-"create" the past, he must have creative talents. He must have the insight and be able to ask the inspired questions that illuminate the past. But no historian can present his story without employing carefully honed skills. Evidence must be gathered with care, the irrelevant discarded, the true distinguished from the false. America's first great historian, George Bancroft, is a good example. Inspired by the democratic dreams of Jacksonian America and by a nostalgic reverence for the American Revolution, Bancroft had the creative ability to retell American history in terms that his fellow countrymen could grasp. Democracy rang from every sentence. But Bancroft was disciplined. Trained at Exeter, Harvard and Göttingen, he was our first professional historian.

No Generalization Without Facts

Just as the historian must combine creativity and discipline, so too he must blend concept and fact. Teachers and students who claim to prefer generalization to fact are making an impossible distinction because one cannot exist without the other. Take for example the concept of the presidency. It is impossible even to think about the concept without calling into play factual information about particular Presidents. And a President such as Lincoln

is not by himself an historical fact, indeed could not exist in our minds, without concepts such as the presidency. As Bancroft well knew, the concept of democracy is no more than the sum total of hundreds of stories from the past. And not one of these stories would have factual meaning without a concept such as democracy.

The teacher must then leave his students free to create, but must discipline them too, confident that he must do both in order to teach well. If, for example, the history teacher defines too narrowly the subject for a paper ("You must write about the brutality of slavery."), he will restrict the chance for his students to be creative. Better to assign a paper on slavery and suggest a variety of topics including the treatment of slaves. But in guiding the students through the paper, the teacher must insist on standard research procedures. Students must be taught to distinguish between a secondary study such as U. B. Phillips' *Life and Labor in the Old South* and a primary work such as *The Narrative and Life of Frederick Douglass*. And the teacher must make certain that the student can perceive the bias in Douglass as readily as that in Phillips. When the paper is written, the teacher should not inhibit creativity by ridiculing unsound hypotheses, but he must not hesitate to point out places where prose and documentation are faulty. As Buckminster and Abbot did with Webster, the teacher must encourage and discipline.

The Webster story also reveals another misconception about teaching. It is alleged at times that persons with too little or too much training will not make good teachers. Obviously a great deal of training is necessary, but I have had preparatory school colleagues with master's degrees who knew more history and taught better than colleagues with doctorates. And among all my acquaintances the teacher who had best mastered the factual data of American History had no advanced degree at all. At the same time I have known teachers with doctorates and several books to their credit who were masters at teaching slow ninth graders. Note in the story about Webster that the person who taught him the most was a twelve-year-old student without much formal training. We must not succumb to stereotypes.

There is still another way in which the story reflects a recurring theme. How can a boarding school master teach well when he is expected to perform so many other tasks? How can one person be expected to teach, coach, run a dormitory and double as an administrator? Well, first of all, coaching is teaching. And a dormitory master is a teacher too. A teacher who spends many hours a day in the dormitory in close contact with his advisees compared to four hours a week in class with his students, has more opportunity to teach the former "the *great end* and *real business* of living" than the latter.³ The administrator can teach effectively if he insists on preserving time for his teaching. Note in the Webster tale that even though Benjamin Abbot was Principal of Phillips Exeter, he found time to teach Daniel Webster.

Finally, it is important to deal with the complaint that teaching destroys a person's opportunity to be creative in his field. The artist, the musician, the historian, the novelist, the preacher — many argue that teaching interferes with their professions. Teaching does of course interfere with creative work, but there is time for both. Historians who teach thirty weeks a year have twenty-two weeks left for research and writing. In addition, teaching enhances creativity, rather than detracting from it. Any number of graduate students have told me that they learned more about their discipline by teaching for a year than they did from graduate study. The discipline of teaching forces the scholar to make his story clear to the student. There is no better training for writing history than teaching it. Over the years my two best teachers were a university professor who spent most of his time doing research and a graduate student whose primary task was completing his dissertation. For these men scholarship and teaching reinforced one another. Such was certainly the case with Joseph Stevens Buckminster, who was both a brilliant scholar and an excellent teacher.

The second tale, concerning Smith Van Buren and Andrew Jackson, provides an opportunity to consider another obstacle

³ John Phillips, "Original Deed of Gift to The Phillips Exeter Academy, Containing the Constitution, May 17, 1781," *The Charter and Constitution of The Phillips Exeter Academy* (Exeter, N.H., 1973), p. 28.

facing teachers. American culture and society today make teaching a difficult task. The impact of television and the decline in verbal skills in the last two decades pose a severe challenge; parents, librarians and teachers all agree that young people do not read as much as they once did. Students who do not like to read find it hard to complete difficult reading assignments.

Not only does our society provide teachers with less well prepared students, but the attitudes of the society are also damaging to education. Ever since the days of Joe McCarthy, America has been plagued by anti-intellectualism. The current anti-intellectualism is unfortunate, for our society badly needs the skills that intellectuals bring to problems. To cope with inflation, unemployment and the energy problem, disciplined intellectual thinking is needed.

The erosion of respect for authority has had an even more damaging effect on teaching. In the last few decades authority has been challenged often and successfully in America. One need not be a Cassandra to believe that American society is threatened if respect for authority is not restored. Both Richard Nixon and the opponents of the Vietnam War resisted authority and used force to have their way. At the same time our society has become more permissive, and parents no longer insist on exercising their authority as they once did. Since teachers depend upon discipline and order, they are hard hit by this decline in respect for authority and by the increase in permissiveness.

And, finally, teaching is hurt by the changing tone of society. A society preoccupied by sensationalism and materialism puts the work of the mind on the defensive. Advertising appeals to the senses to create tastes and desires that will promote sales. Instead of emphasizing polished acting, movies depend upon sex, violence and spectacles. The values of the counter culture and the drug culture run contrary to those of teaching.

The Smith Van Buren story suggests that schoolmasters had similar difficulties in 1830. Since young Van Buren had not been disciplined by his preoccupied father, it is not surprising that the boy should have resented the authority of a schoolmaster. It may

seem surprising that the President of the United States supported this youthful rebellion, but it is not. From the time he was a young frontiersman, Andrew Jackson had time and again resorted to violence and had disobeyed authority. He had murdered in duels, tortured slaves, killed Indians, executed prisoners, violated the orders of President Monroe and shown little respect for the decisions of Chief Justice Marshall. It is not surprising that Old Hickory should have enjoyed the rebellion of Smith Van Buren. Jackson was as anti-intellectual and as materialistic as anyone today. And Smith Van Buren's home life was far more permissive than that found at Berkshire Gymnasium.

In short, the times were no more propitious for good teaching in 1830 than they are today. In fact it is difficult to find a time in which teachers really had the undivided support of society. In 1820 Washington Irving struck a responsive nerve by making fun of the schoolmaster Ichabod Crane, just as the show *Our Miss Brooks* poked fun at teachers in the early days of television. Teachers have never been folk heroes and have never received the approval or the financial rewards given performers, businessmen and doctors.

The teaching profession then has never been an easy one, and teachers have never been rewarded or supported as well as they would like. But the obstacles and difficulties are as surmountable now as they were in the days of Webster and Van Buren. Those devoted to the profession should get on with the job. It is worth doing.

SCAPHIOPUS COUCHII

Silent in the Sonora
the spadefoot toads
survive till summer
locked down in sand
sucking underground
the precious winter
dampness.
Come the hot rain
and they will come out
breed in the sand, the water,
hang their eggs in pools
a yard deep, a foot, six inches,
the life jelly now
growing
fighting beetles
a dry evaporation
the lack of food
their own black numbers
swelling, dying, swimming
limbless with a memory
of the first brood
a million years ago
or the second, or third,
it doesn't matter
come out to be alive
and stun the seasons
hang in black space
with a throaty spadefoot
incandescent cry.

JIM STOKELY

The Public Image of Teachers

Some Alternatives

JACK HERNEY

It has become something of a tradition that whenever any politician gains a great personal triumph — be it election to alderman, Governor or President (as witnessed a few months ago) — the individual trots out his particular Hall of Fame of formidable influences on his life. These include members of his family and always some teacher from long ago who, on her knee, taught the eternal verities via a fourth grade reader or a ruler across the knuckles. The benighted one is now in her dotage, white-haired, rosy-cheeked and altogether uncomfortable and embarrassed as the momentarily humble and grateful politician ballyhoos the emulative qualities of his Teacher-Hero. Sadly for all of us, but fortunately for the reputation of the Teacher-Hero, we have recently been treated to the sad discovery that after the fourth grade reader the public servant succeeded in a curriculum of felonies and Bill of Rights abuses that also contributed to his success. Despite these scandals of the recent past and present, the Teacher-Hero remains respected, dignified and a reservoir of virtue.

No matter how often the touching scene described above is repeated in the particular, teachers in general, as a group, remain second-class citizens. Far different from the admirable portrait brushed by the grateful politician stands society's stereotype of the teacher. In the 17th and 18th centuries he is pictured as a humorless, severe, black-robed autocrat obsessed with the instructional utility

of canings and willow switches, a figure unable to cope with the rough and tumble America and thus banished to the security of the classroom. In the 19th and early 20th centuries we have the naive, plain, socially insecure and emotionally repressed schoolmarm, a soul sister of the librarian. Neither is exactly the stuff that heroes are made of.

Society at large has bestowed on teaching as a profession little of the respect, to say nothing of related financial reward, that it conveys to Teacher-Heroes on isolated, ceremonial occasions. They have been underpaid, Hero or not. I recently met with four representatives of the New Hampshire NEA who had stopped in the office to discuss pending legislation. One, after four years of college, many hours of graduate work and five year's experience was earning \$8700 a year. Though none of the others cited cases quite so extreme, they admitted that second jobs were very much the norm, one salary being completely insufficient to support a family.

As residents of ivory towers, teachers are also considered naive and idealistic by tough-minded businessmen of the "real world." I recall hearing a friend, a teacher, recount a discussion with his businessman-uncle. "You've been teaching, what, five years now? When are you going to get out of that and into a real business, a real line of work?" He was deadly serious.

Others view teachers as motivated by visions of long vacations rather than any missionary zeal or pride in their craft. For them, teachers don't choose the profession, they fall into it. "Well, if you can't do anything else, you can always teach." And even more disparaging: "If you can't teach, you can teach teachers." Satirists in the Far West have created, no doubt under the influence of some hallucinogen, a new educational institution which is somewhat revealing of public sentiment. This whimsical fabrication has no frills such as curriculum, buildings, instructors or classes. The more important ornaments of academe such as beer mugs, athletic gear and football schedule are in abundant supply, all emblazoned with the school name — Aspen State Teachers College.

Having viewed this paradox for most of my professional life from the self-interested and therefore somewhat myopic perspective of a

teacher, I recently deserted the ranks to assume the guise of public servant. (To say I was in politics would put me in a class even lower in public esteem than teacher, hovering in that twilight world of public shame reserved for welfare cheaters and shoplifters.) Such camouflage has provided the opportunity to consort with non-teachers, who, assuming me to be a fellow-traveler, have readily revealed their prejudices. What follows then are some observations from this underworld of non-academia.

To be sure, some measure of disdain is warranted. Like any profession teaching suffers its share of dullards, incompetents and nincompoops who regrettably dishonor the vocation. I recall a colleague of graduate school who taught in a suburban public school near Boston. His teaching style was disinterested languor. He assumed a reclining position, or as nearly supine as can be accomplished at a desk and chair, feet up on the former, leaning back in the latter, so that he was barely visible over the tips of his shoes. In a funereal monotone he recited strings of facts from his *Morrison and Commager*, occasionally punctuated with an anecdote from his army days or discourses on sports trivia. He publicly championed his ability to leave school at 3:30 and not think about history until the next day of classes, leaving some of us to conclude uncharitably that this accounted for the entire 24 hours. A happy refugee of the tenure system, he did not allow enthusiasm, interest or ambition to intrude on his restful school days.

Let us not be unfair, however. This case is, in my experience as teacher and student, extreme; and reasonable men will excuse us our exceptions just as we excuse gentlemen farmers their Simon Legrees and businessmen their Billie Sol Estes. General impressions are not made from such distinguished charlatans, however notable they may be.

There lurks within the profession another villain — The Apologizer — who, perhaps unwittingly, evokes disdain. One confessed Apologizer, a friend of mine, recounted to me how, when asked by a stranger at some social event what he did for a living, would respond, “I’m a teacher but. . . .” Following that conjunction would fall the qualifier intended to elicit respect: some administrative func-

tion he had assumed or the name of the fashionable boarding school at which he was teaching or some writing he had recently undertaken. Whatever the qualifier, it was designed to put distance between him and the negative image of the profession he presumed his companion to have. That was Apologizer before reformation. Now when asked, he flatly states, "I'm a teacher" and fiercely stares down his questioner, ready to challenge whatever response is forthcoming.

The Apologizer syndrome is, of course, not peculiar to the teaching profession. After all, individuals of any occupation like to feel distinctive in some way and to interject distinguishable qualities in their biographies. With no empirical data whatever to support the contention, I do suspect that teachers might be more inclined to compensate in this way, given the lowly economic and social status of the profession.

However much teachers might deserve low regard or however much they might reinforce it themselves by their own lack of self-confidence, there are larger forces that not only determine their place in society but condition possible change. Historically teaching has been a public service profession under the proprietary eye of the community. Citizens since colonial times have been particularly jealous of their prerogatives regarding matters of taxation and education. Legal control through boards of education has funneled real political and administrative power to a handful of laymen. Such an openly political process also means that sovereignty resides in the public at large, thus creating in the citizenry real sanctions over the education profession and, perhaps more importantly, the psychological tendency to assume expertise in all educational matters.

The combination of having graduated from the system and later controlling it, even from the remoteness of the ballot box, means that any community potentially harbors as many educational philosophies as there are adults, all self-willed and inclined to voice or even impose that philosophy. The absence of esoterica in education and the proximity of political control leads to an abundance of citizen-experts. The fact that the education system evolved from the

will of the people has meant that the system has responded to these sponsors and has historically reflected their ideals.

Moreover, like any public servant, the school teacher relies on the will of the body politic to dictate more mundane matters than a teaching philosophy, such as salary. Categorized with firemen and policemen as too critical to the public welfare to be allowed strikes, teachers have also been denied access to avenues of redress. Educators have not discovered effective alternatives to impress their concern on the political system, as a result in some part of their own schizophrenia. Are teachers engaged in dignified and honorable toil not unlike doctors and lawyers which presuppose the kind of genteel lobbying practiced by those callings? Or are teachers more a skilled labor group granted recourse to more aggressive and earthy tactics to obtain an honest day's pay for an honest day's work? This identity problem is complemented by ambiguity in the public mind and remains unresolved. Certainly the current NEA legislative initiatives, consistent with this latter identity, are subjects of much anxiety and contention in Washington.

This historic political impotence has been reinforced, to some extent, by the sociological dimension of education. It has long been a profession viewed by the sons and daughters of lower and lower-middle class families as a means to improve social respectability. Achieving modest but real social mobility has, until recently, sufficed as a social goal, and the political timidity of teachers became an expected attitude. They have not been people with the economic strength, the raw numbers or the psychological inclination to make a significant impact on the political system. Again, despite some recent flexing of political muscle, Washington still maintains a patronizing attitude toward the profession.

Perhaps even more fundamental, the whole ethic of a capitalistic society, with its emphasis on production, profit and competition, has tended to diminish the reputation of non-producers. Our cultural heroes have been soldiers, adventurers, inventors, businessmen, politicians — all individuals who have succeeded in some concrete, quantifiable, visible fashion in hacking out a career in the highly competitive American environment. While education has been highly

valued by the society and therefore has brought early attention to its public management, it is valuable not because we honor and respect the ideal of the educated and virtuous individual. We value education because it is the means by which men and women compete and succeed. We value the utility of education, its assistance in making a living. Thus educators are less celebrated than their successful products.

A corollary to this view that teachers are less than active competitors in the great race holds that they must, therefore, entertain a creative naivete about it all. One argument, for instance, maintains that academics labor under the delusion that facts are important and compound their folly by teaching this notion to students. Education implicitly or explicitly assumes the integrity of fact, which leads to the false conclusion that scientific analysis, historic inquiry and mathematical precision will produce solutions to problems. In reality, the argument goes, there are no facts. Starting with most any reasonable premise, a parade of facts can be assembled to defend it. An opposing premise can, however, marshal an alternate set of facts that may be just as convincing. Honest men would hesitate to determine which premise was correct. Solutions, the argument concludes, are reserved for the pristine world of academics while others must toil daily in the uneasy world where one person's fact is another's distortion.

No doubt these larger forces — the historical, sociological and the cultural — may not prove immediately susceptible to change, and the potential for teachers to alter their status in society may be limited. While this may smack of resignation, it is based on the contention that teaching is a politically dependent profession viewed as non-productive, theoretical and abstract, existing in an alien world of pragmatic, commercial realities and politically independent forces. Yet any patronizing attitude is not only the sum of historic conditions, accumulated prejudices and accepted stereotypes but also the product of current behavior.

What might teachers do, then, that would positively affect the image and the reputation of the profession? It goes without saying that the goal of being a first-rate teacher is a full-time occupation

which requires constant work and attention. For those individuals able and competent enough to accomplish this and still have time on their hands, there is the need of the profession for people who are willing to share ideas on teaching with others. Self-improvement and increasing the potential of other teachers are direct, effective and enormously time-consuming ways of improving the public image of the profession.

But beyond this laudable goal, a new organization might be started, let's call it Apologists Anonymous, for those who might feel the need for support in their continuing battle against creeping conjunctions which qualify their identity. My reformed-Apologist friend has found it enormously cathartic and satisfying to spit out his professional identity without qualification, accompanied, of course, with a fierce stare. One would, no doubt, find allies in unlikely places. A former teaching colleague admitted that he quickly tired of the reaction of people when he mentioned his new profession — banking. A vacant, faraway look would come over them, their eyes would momentarily glaze and they would struggle for some appropriate response, usually, "How nice." Now he's accustomed to say, "I'm a banker, but would you like to know what I used to do?"

Quite the opposite from the Apologizer syndrome, but an equally harmful defensive posture, is a kind of self-righteousness that distinguishes teaching as a more than honorable calling, superior to other secular crafts in its vision and its virtue. This simply renders teachers immobile, unengaged and, while pursuing rectitude by detachment, impotent in decisions that affect the profession. Pride in one's craft need not be inhibitive nor so extreme that it limits other experiences one might otherwise undertake.

There is no Hatch Act for teachers. While political activity associates one with various forms of lowlife, it can be personally rewarding for those so inclined and beneficial to the profession as a whole. While educators will never escape the disparagement associated with the ivory tower, one healthy antidote would be experience in the combative and worldly game of politics. It is fun, personally rewarding and might offer the advantage of leverage in critical public policy matters that affect the profession.

Admittedly this would be of limited appeal to most committed educators, who would rather sustain and improve the profession by staying in it than leave it. At the same time, teaching is more than an art or craft, it is also a matter of public policy. Recognized as such, teachers can exert influence and pressure at various points in the process, short of making policy themselves, and still maintain their identity as teachers. Maintaining an articulate presence individually in the community on educational issues, or any public issue, and beyond that, bringing the collective resources of teachers to bear on public issues are not perceived by public officials or communities at large as traditional behavior for teachers. To step beyond the expectations of public figures and to assume such roles would raise the significance of education in public consciousness and enhance the reputation of teachers individually and as a group, so long as this visibility was not seen as solely concerned with economic matters.

Further, it has been the established practice of businesses and industry to sponsor sabbaticals and leaves of absences for employees who wish to avail themselves of short-term experiences in the public sector. Such opportunities are wisely seen as beneficial not only for the personal growth of the individual involved but as an investment for the firm as well. For school administrators and professional associations to provide similar experiences for teachers is both a challenge and an opportunity and need not be limited to public service.

Certainly educators should jealously guard and preserve the advantages of the profession: the time for reflection and thought so elusive to others; the detachment for accountable decision-making which allows objective and dispassionate analysis of problems; the freedom to experiment and to fail and the joy of watching others do the same without ultimate sanctions imposed for failure; the privilege of watching others realize their talent and their potential and the power of their own mind. While it may seem presumptuous to assume that teachers should or could do more, the opportunity to balance the professional role with a more public posture or with non-educational experiences would excite teachers, expand the opportunities for personal growth and invigorate the profession. Moreover, the issues that confront education, not only philosophical but

hard economic and social issues that are debated in school boards, in State Houses, in HEW offices and in Congress, are too important to be left to non-teachers.

This public policy side to education and the related suggestions regarding non-teaching professional experiences will not appeal to everyone, which is just fine. Teachers are not judged by which combination of activities they choose but by the authenticity of those choices and the competence to act on them. The true test of any professional activity is whether it is fulfilling and challenging. While this little essay has considered the public image of teachers, comments are offered not as prescriptions but as alternatives, recognizing that any action undertaken simply to pander to society's established values and reward system flirts with irresponsibility. What society honors is sometimes transitory, and we must avoid selling ourselves for a mess of pottage. In a recent cartoon, a silver-haired, distinguished, elegantly dressed gentleman, a very parody of the successful American — at least a school board member but more probably a trustee — gazes over the top of his martini and remarks to his mirror image across the table, "I've learned a lot in sixty-three years. But, unfortunately, almost all of it is about aluminum." Teaching satisfies and fulfills more than this — but then there is something to be said for aluminum.

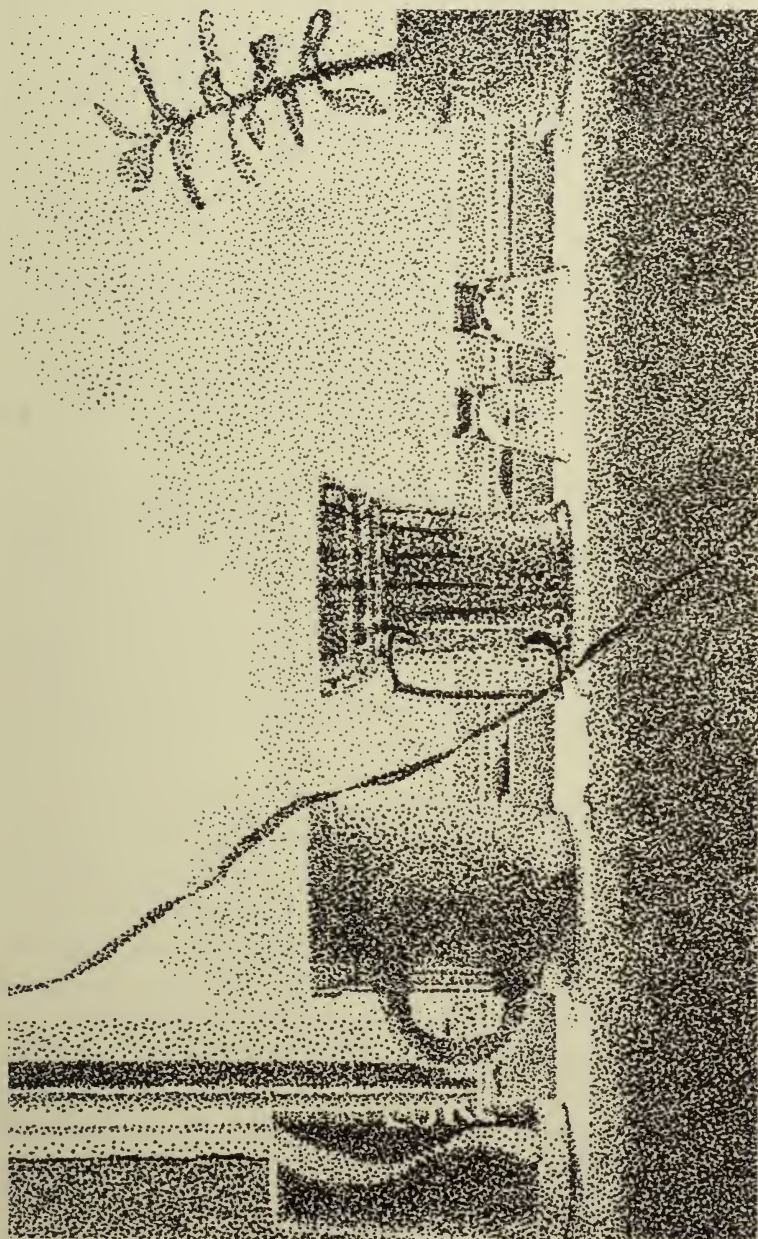
EVERYTHING HAS A NAME

Not just animals, but the legs of chairs: cabriole.
Corbled: the ancient
bone chambers under the hill.

I wanted it all simple:
the bed and the table and the chair
in Van Gogh's room.

But there's a name for every variation.
It is my fear
never to forget a name I hear.

MARY TUTEUR



HEATHER LITTLE

Postindustrial Society and Education

An Introduction to William Irwin Thompson

LINDA L. FISHER

William Irwin Thompson conceives of our culture as planetary and postindustrial and our educational system as needing more than a face-lift to meet the demands of the new age. By planetary culture, Thompson means an internationally global culture defined not in the sense of increased numbers of multinational corporations, political structures and bureaucracies, but rather a culture resourceful to global communications — a culture which looks beyond and through institutions to world, human and societal well-being.

Our educational system, on a continuum from nursery school to grammar school to high school, college and the Ph.D., is for Thompson often a conveyor belt of routine papers, lectures and classes. At the end of the assembly line is the degree which once was a certificate to promise and opportunity. Now demystified in the postindustrial culture of the new age, the degree leads some to jobs, but many even with Ph.D.'s to unemployment.

According to Thompson, the shift in educational means and ends is parallel in our culture to the shift from an industrial society to a postindustrial one. We are now questioning our values, goals, institutions, our government, our educational system — everything that has comprised our capitalist system and defines who and what we are. What has arisen is culturally much like a geological fault, leading to such alternatives as a new Dark Ages, future shock, or more optimistically, a new Renaissance or Reformation.

In the late Middle Ages, priests such as Martin Luther questioned the governing body of the Holy Roman Catholic Church, walked out on the Church and founded the university. Reformers such as Luther felt that the Church had grown too ritualistic, too powerful and too removed from the people. Are today's universities and schools equivalent to the churches of yesterday's Medieval Catholicism? A man or woman of the Middle Ages following to the letter the dictates of the Holy Roman Catholic Church was guaranteed a place in heaven. If today we follow all the requirements demanded by our universities and secondary schools, we are assured a degree leading to wealth, riches and economic opportunity — in short, paradise on earth.

William Irwin Thompson may be today's Martin Luther. Walking out on the university, he questions the rituals of high school, its credits, degrees, requirements and prerequisites. He questions the sermonic college lecture delivered from church-pulpit-like podiums and feels that our schools lead not to opportunity but to emptiness. Not always in the Middle Ages were the Roman churches out of step with the people, and not always have today's schools bred such discontent. But the fact is the problem is again before us and again must be faced.

In our postindustrial society, the gap is growing wider between human needs and educational degrees. Moreover, unemployment underlines the acuteness of the problem. On the negative side, we have a postindustrial culture confronting such problems as inflation (take the cost to attend schools), pollution, ecological disruption and threat of nuclear war. On the positive side, we have a postindustrial culture of extra-planetary satellites, growing global communications systems, and new explorational possibilities in energy, ecology and human awareness.

But does our mass educational system measure up to these mutations of the post-modern, postindustrial planetary culture? Do the Gutenberg-aged curricula of our secondary schools and colleges add up to promise and fulfillment in the new world? Thompson says, "no," thus his "Walking Out On the University."

Walking Out On the University

WILLIAM IRWIN THOMPSON

As a historian in a university I was merely marking time. I realized that I could not live in a new civilization *and* the university. Everywhere around me I could see the signs of an historical era coming to an end. A fine finish to Western civilization shone out on the bright glass buildings of the modern state university. What was hidden in all the camouflage of tradition at Oxford or Princeton, and only sensed in fleeting moments of inattention in common rooms and faculty clubs, was brazenly expressed in the office-building architecture of the universities of the postindustrial state. Just a few years ago great buildings were dedicated with speeches that celebrated a new age of triumphant rationality created by enlightened investment in higher education. With the best intentions of demonstrating the high level of modern society made secure by the new management sciences, governments spent lavish funds on building citadels of progress with wall-to-wall carpets and occasional pieces of art.

Now these same buildings are slums where sullen bodies sprawl along the floor and pass a joint among themselves. Like Indians on a reservation or the poor in public housing, these students treat their physical surroundings with a contempt for the facile condescension built into the forms of their incarceration. They put out their cigarettes in the carpets, steal the paintings from the walls, strew their trash everywhere, bring their barking dogs into the lectures, and leave their old condoms in the elevators of the coeducational dorms. If the students must study, they cut out the assigned section of the book from the reserve room in the library, or, if the book is naïvely left in the open stacks, they steal it altogether. If that is too much trouble, then they buy a term paper from a company organized for the purpose. With four-track stereo minds, they pile sound on sound,

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and listen to portable TVs while they read, hold rock concerts in the academic halls, and talk and walk about during the lectures. Navahos speeding in a Ford pickup and slinging beer cans out the window onto the Arizona mesa could not show more contempt for the irrelevance of their traditions than do these denizens of the modern Youth Reservation.

These are the children of the suburbs, who have been institutionalized in schools all their lives. They almost always obey, but they take out their repressed rebellion in acts of trivial revolt like the trashing of the campus, for in garbage they sense the entropic state of our civilization. What the city fathers deny with their buildings, the kids affirm with their trash. Without the courage to drop out or the will to suffer their freedom, the ones who remain institutionalized take a compensatory pride in acts of bourgeois petty thievery and think that in "ripping off" a book from the student bookstore they have committed an act of existential affirmation in the face of the Establishment.

This is the paradoxical university of the students: a Dionysian bureaucracy. The university of the faculty is its mirror-image: an Apollonian irrationality. All is order and methodology. As soon as consciousness senses a threat, an academic methodology breaks it down in pieces so that the whole problem cannot be seen. Utterly engrossed in the details of committee work, these specialists could pluck hairs from the face of terror and never have to look it in the eye. Forced to spend more of their lives in committees than in the classroom or library, these teachers are taught how to become "managers of a learning system." In each committee a crisis comes regularly along to convince the professor of his new importance in the wider sphere of public affairs. He no longer notices that the internal mimeographed material from all his committees weighs up to fifty pounds a year. He succumbs to his responsibilities, but he takes the students down with him, for now they, too, are allowed to serve on committees, to become responsible members of the academic community.

The contemporary university with its socialized education is, as the founding president of York University, Murray Ross, has said, "a large public corporation." Its purpose is, therefore, to teach people how to live in a large public corporation, and this can be done as well in a committee as in a classroom. In fact, as committees begin to dominate the life of a university, the atmosphere of the classroom

changes from one of a teacher with his students to one of a committee chairman with a team of consultants. The role of an educational bureaucracy is to educate people to bureaucracy, and this can be done as well in a course in humanities as in one in business administration. If one controls the structure, he can afford to allow a liberal amount of play in the content. The more that alien subjects like mysticism, revolution, or sexuality can be brought into the structures of curricular behavior determined by educational management, the more these structures prove their power over just those areas of experience that might subvert them.

The call for reform from within thus becomes one of the cleverest devices to preserve the structure. Reformers fancy that by opening up the curriculum to subjects that seem relevant to youth, such as poverty, abortion, or gay liberation, they will create a healthy university; but all they really will be doing is offering Sociology 100, 101, 102, 103. The culture of the university remains the same.

And the culture will remain the same until the problem is seen as a whole. The problem as a whole is that our institutions are no longer in sync with the pattern of human growth through time. We think that time is a line that moves from bad to better, from poverty to progress, from ignorance to knowledge, from grades 1 to 20. The point of the line is to develop an identity through a function and then maintain that function for as "long" as possible. Any deviation from the line is deviant behavior. The sins of the fathers are passed on to the sons, and this unfortunate patrimony is our inheritance from the industrial era.

Before the Industrial Revolution, children worked with their parents and relatives on the farm. They did not have to be flattered as being responsible members of the community, for it would never have occurred to anyone to consider them anything else. But when the factories began to replace cottage industries, the parents became collectivized in the new institution, and so it was thought only natural that the children should be too. But the younger members of the human species did not take to industrialization so readily; the factory literally became a Procrustean bed, and as the children began to lose eye and limb from their encounter with the machines, it became obvious that they did not fit in the new institution of the factory. And so a new institution was created, the public school, and the collectivization of the parents was matched in the collectivization of the children.

The public school in America was more powerful than its counterpart in Great Britain. Since we were a nation of immigrants, the central task of the school was Americanization. Whatever the teacher may have said about the three R's, she was basically saying: "Your parents have an accent; I don't. If you want to belong to America, you must reject your parents and come to me." Like an apparitional Statue of Liberty, the public school teacher held an illusory torch of learning aloft and summoned all the waifs to her side. She took the children away from their parents, just as America took the immigrants away from Europe. The children learned their lessons well; they Anglicized their names and moved into education and teaching as the most immediately open vehicle of upward mobility — and power, the power to become matriarchal statues of liberty themselves. In the age of print, when big cities and big books contained what civilization had to offer, the system went on unchallenged. But by the age of television the media became a more effective means of Americanization. The educational system that had worked on the Jews or the Irish could no longer work on the blacks; and when Jewish teachers in New York tried to take black children away from their parents exactly in the way they had been taken from theirs, they were shocked to encounter a violent affirmation of negritude. The encounter was an important one, for the power of education had become too great; while claiming to be the protector of liberty in a democracy, the educational system had slowly grown into a center for the distribution of tranquilizers and behavioral modification. The public school system, which had been created to put muscle into democracy, ended up by becoming the closing fingers of the long arm of the state.

When education became big business, it joined up with the union of big business and big government; in all large corporations, public or private, the central feature of behavior is obedience to corporate routines. The lines of desks matched the production line, and time was taken up in progress through grades. From the cradle to the grave, from rags to riches, the new man had to make his way on down the line. Of course, it didn't work very well, but then agricultural civilization hadn't worked very well either. It could have gone on for thousands of years, just as agricultural civilization had, but then something remarkable happened. Industrial civilization came to an end. Daniel Bell would give one reason, McLuhan another, but, whether because of automation or the electronic media, stu-

dents began to revolt or drop out and Swedish auto workers began to refuse the "chimpanzee work" of the production line.

What was happening was that all the lines of industrial culture were breaking up; people were "making waves" again. The natural life rhythms of Homo Sapiens were reasserting themselves after two centuries of hibernation in the iron winter of the industrial era. Teenagers began dropping out of school; middle-aged men took dramatic turns into whole new careers; and housewives walked out of the kitchen with as much religious yearning as the Lord Gautama had when he walked out of the nursery of his sleeping infant.

If one stays inside a kitchen, a school, or a corporation, then what is happening looks terrible and anarchic: all civilization is breaking down. But if one moves outside, he can see that on the other side of the social uterine wall there is sunlight and space in which to breathe and move, and that, in fact, after a few cries of fear, it is all rather wonderful. There is more pulse to this new life, and if it moves in alternating waves, that does not mean that it lacks an overall sense of direction. As creatures begin to take their own time to move *with* life rather than *through* life, we can begin to see that there is a whole new rhythm to the way the pageant unfolds itself.

No longer is there one single identity to man, the functionary; instead, there are now two gods within the self that pulse in a cycle alternating between Homo Ludens, the being of play, and Homo Faber, the doer of work.*

*Thompson expands on this notion of Homo Ludens and Homo Faber in *Passages About Earth*, making the following divisions in alternating seven-year cycles:

Homo Ludens (Play)

Ages 1-7
14-21
28-35
49-63

Homo Faber (Work)

Ages 7-14
21-28
35-49
63-77 (Homo Sapiens)

At elementary school age, children of seven through fourteen are apt to delight in memorizing facts: capitals of nations, names of the planets, species of flora and fauna. At this stage, children should be in school.

During the teenage years, however, ages fourteen to twenty-one, the child should leave school. Containing students in secondary schools is against the flow of a child's natural development. Emotional, sexual and physical activities make themselves manifest during these years, and libraries and classrooms are not the proper environments for adolescents.

Full discussion of each stage can be found in *Passages About Earth* (New York: Harper, 1974), pp. 18-24.

Ages 14-21 (Homo Ludens)

From the ages of seven to fourteen, when they delight in collecting objects and facts, children should be in school; but by the time of their teens they should be released from school, and in good Maoist fashion sent out to work and play in rural communes. At fourteen the individual begins to experience a new phase of creative expansion; it is what Freud called the period of "the return of the repressed." Now the youth must struggle to master the body and the heart. Along with the explosions of puberty comes an explosion of new emotions and tenderness. The mode of being shifts from the apparent toughness of the fact-gatherer to a softer and more "feely" approach to all ideas. To try to contain people in schools at this stage of life is to do violence to their whole nature. They need to grow and develop through emotional and physical activities, not through sitting in libraries trying to understand the passionate abstractions of older people. It was in a clumsy recognition of this phase that high schools and colleges were often excuses for football teams, but in the old aggressive and competitive industrial culture there was never a full recognition of all the qualities of adolescence. Adolescents need to grow through sexual discovery, emotional bonding, music, poetry, work, and dance: in short, through play in the truest cultural sense of the word. If human beings are kept in schools during this stage, they will simply convert them into nurseries of show-and-tell. Asked for intellectual papers, they will simply turn in collages, finger paintings, or seven blank pages as a Zen statement. Compressed into a space that forces them to explode, they need to be given an open space which allows them to explore. We do not have to ship them off to a seven-year summer camp. Instead, following the wisdom of the Chinese, we can give them work full of high ideals and new cultural purposes: not the army but such independent cultural centers as Paolo Soleri's Arcosanti.

Ages 21-28 (Homo Faber)

After a period of physical and emotional growth through feeling, one begins to surfeit on "feely" approaches to ideas and begins to hunger for what Yeats called "the mastery of what is difficult." All university teachers that I have talked to about the problems of youth culture will readily admit that the best students are those who have dropped out and later returned to college. I first noticed this differ-

ence when I had students of different ages in a small seminar. The younger students couldn't care less about Yeats as Yeats: they looked upon the poems as Rorschachs for their own inner workings. The older students were very impatient with the younger ones. They were tired of looking into a mirror and wanted to break out of the closet of their own emotions; they wanted to learn how to read a difficult text and see what Yeats had in mind. There is no question at all in my mind but that well over half the problems of our universities would be solved if we adjusted them to the right age group, opened them up to become resource centers like public libraries, and allowed people to come in at various levels. If people were allowed to have a natural growth from fourteen to twenty-one, then they would not have to endure a delayed adolescence at twenty-four. Students who have gone directly from high school to college are inevitably in a state of emotional frustration. If they have gone to graduate school straight after college, then they are in a state of suspended rage from the suppression of their human natures.

Half of our student protest in the sixties was just such a natural outcome of our unnatural totalizing of education from kindergarten to the Ph.D. Its lack of a true political source was evidenced at Kent State. When the Right Wing obliged the revolutionaries by shooting innocent students, and thus giving them a perfect chance for precipitating a condition of civil war, the student revolutionaries demonstrated that they were more students than revolutionaries. The era of mass student protest came to an end and the students cried, in their own words: "Don't shoot; we are your children." If people were given a full and rich period of development from fourteen to twenty-one, then by twenty-one they would be hungry to follow that period of creative expansion with a period of consolidation into form. Then they would be ready for the civilized rigors of university or professional school; then they could respect and follow traditions without trying to pervert them into caricatures of learning. In a healthy culture people could proceed smoothly from B.A. to Ph.D., LL.B., or M.D. in the period from twenty-one to twenty-eight.

An understanding of the cycles of life helps us to see that it contains a dynamic quality that is not met by our linear institutions. In industrial society our institutions do not work for teenagers, women, and old people; they work only for people who are concerned with power and making money. Our institutions demand that people do

not make waves, that they stand in line and wait, wait for promotions, raises, and degrees. The image of the production line dominates all our institutions, cultural or economic. But now that the Industrial Revolution has reached its limit to growth, a new cultural revolution is taking place and the priorities of life are being set in the scale against GNPs and Ph.D.s.

This revolution is one in which the energy of culture shifts from institutions to the whole environment. Religion moves out of churches, education moves out of schools, business moves out of factories, and politics moves out of the party system.

As government moves away from representational democracy to executive management, so the university moves away from a critical to a consulting role. The power of government and the authority of education are collapsed together into a single ideology called "the sciences of human management." And just as once there was no appeal from the power of the Church without risking damnation, so now there is no appeal from the power of science without risking a charge of irrationality or insanity. Of course, the behavioral sciences are not really scientific, any more than the Established Church in nineteenth-century England was really holy. Once, it was useful to the ruling class to have the younger sons in the Church, for this lent an air of respectability to its rule and disguised naked power with the more civilized vestments of the Anglican Church. Now we no longer respect these vestments and so the ruling class has changed them to doctoral robes from Harvard. With its Bundys, Moynihans, and Kissingers, Harvard has become the Canterbury Cathedral of the Established Church of postindustrial society.

Now, having lived through a golden age in which "The Best and the Brightest" sat at the right hand of the father, we can begin to see just how disastrous it is to turn Harvard into a stopover on the way to Washington.

Now big business and big government have been joined by big foundations and big education. Culture has collapsed into society, and society has been compressed into very narrow range of Republican-Democratic politics. The university, now dependent upon government support, has become the major center of distribution for the new ideology of human management. But with its success has come a deeper failure. Just as once in the nineteenth century the university took authority away from the Church, so now the new culture is beginning to take authority away from the university.

The university was first a village, and then in the days of Oxford and Cambridge it became a town; in the era of Harvard and Berkeley it became a city-state. Now, through the Kissingers and Skinners of Harvard, the tiny city-state, like an ancient Rome, is growing to become the new empire of behavioral civilization. Because history is in the humanities it has no place in "value-free" social science; and so what is missing in the grand imperial vision is an historical memory and a tragic sense that a society which seeks to live like an empire will die like one.



JENNIFER BENSLEY

WEST WINDOW

The rows of plants send out tentative answers
and some of them are wrong, perhaps, but
the sun is their teacher, not I. They stand
as if for a photograph in their separate pots,
dependent but confiding in no one.

The room of a person, that china teacup
of civilised snow, makes the way of a thing
take light, was here yesterday and every day
changes. The new leaf hesitates but is not lost,
and it is not vanity to be a woman

who is no more than tenant, daughter,
follower, fan, vine, parade, and borrower.

In the span of a month I have touched a horse,
drawn a woman in a girdle of half-moons
and stars, received some lavender as a present,
bought patchouli, rose, and paint thinner,
books and stamps and 25-watt globes.

It is all here in a cluttered cache,
my luck, my dreams, and privacy. How well
I have seen the temporal fact of it all, but
less every moment do I want to leave it all,
or carry it with me. I ask, not where can I go,

but how can I go, as the shawl and the shelf
grow dearer and I more within, more within?

LAURA JENSEN

Thoughts on John Holt's *Instead of Education*

A Critique of the School System

BILL LITTLEFIELD

John Holt's first books (*How Children Fail*, *How Children Learn*) pointed out the hidden biases and destructive potential of the public school system in this country and offered suggestions about how teachers and parents might circumvent these hazards to the healthy development of children. *Freedom and Beyond*, published in 1972, tied the schools into the production of an industrial nation's primary need: an unimaginative work force willing to take orders, watch rather than participate and consume an infinity of products at an insane rate. While maintaining that it was unrealistic to expect schools to be innovative in this context, Holt agreed with his "reformer-friends" (his phrase) that because we are likely to have the schools with us for some time, it made sense to try to force them to be better. Now he has bolted that camp. This is the final paragraph of Holt's *Instead of Education*, published in 1976 and recently (April, '77) issued in paperback:

Meanwhile, education — compulsory schooling, compulsory learning — is a tyranny and a crime against the human mind and spirit. Let all those escape it who can, any way they can.¹

Although it has taken Holt many years and books to reach the

¹ John Holt, *Instead of Education*, Delta, 1977, p. 222.

point where he does not work in schools himself and no longer believes in reforming them, the position he has taken can be summarized simply. People learn things by doing them, and schools offer very little opportunity for children to do what they want to do. People don't learn the things they don't want to learn, or have no use for; therefore children don't learn much in the classroom except, negatively, how to get along in school by figuring out what the teacher wants and providing it whenever necessary. Holt contends that no matter how fine the teacher or how progressive the curriculum, we cannot escape this repressive and depressing trap as long as the state can compel children to attend school. Private or alternative schools may seem to offer an out for the rich and/or lucky, but this is an illusion; the most "far-out" organic non-classroom in the mountains will still draw its students essentially because it is better than the school they would otherwise be forced to attend, rather than because they have made the unencumbered choice to be there. Holt neatly ties this obvious notion into our adult experience when he relates an anecdote about a Volvo worker in Sweden. His plant had publicized the "revolutionary" changes that had been made on the "job-improved" assembly line, changes which would theoretically free the worker from his automaton slot by allowing him to perform a variety of tasks rather than repeat one simple operation: "Asked if he liked the new way better than the old, he (the worker) replied, 'Yes, but any way you look at it, putting cars together is lousy work.'"²

This is not to say, then, that all schools are equally bad, and Holt talks about some of the least coercive schools he knows with the same warmth with which 60's crusaders discussed the free schools and peoples' colleges. His favorite is the Ny Lilleskole in Denmark, a private alternative to the public system, and an unusually open place where students are allowed to learn both from each other and from the competent and interesting adults around. (Perhaps that description sounds neutral enough, but it is thoroughly revolutionary in comparison with any school system which grades and ranks children, thus creating a situation where there

² *Ibid.*, p. 66.

can only be winners at the expense of many losers, and in which children can't be expected to help each other much.) Still, the Ny Lilleskole does not constitute a model which many schools could follow. As a unique setting, it doesn't threaten the system of public education or the larger system, and is thus tolerated by the government. A "movement" would not be likely to enjoy the same tolerance. More importantly, the Ny Lilleskole is plainly a defensive alternative; as Holt points out, "a society that would allow all its schools to become more or less like the Ny Lilleskole would not want any schools at all, and would simply do away with them."³

False Hopes

Along this line, Holt's hope is for a society "which is open, accessible, visible to all its citizens, young and old, and in which every citizen, however old or young, has the right to play an active, serious, responsible and useful part."⁴ This is a dream which goes well beyond what schools, or even not-schools, can accomplish, but it may provide some insight into the longevity of the public school system in this country and the stubbornness with which it has resisted reform. The problem is that despite a great deal of evidence to the contrary, people continue to treat the system as if it works as it is advertised, as if it is the means to the more traditional American Dream. Poor people believe that schooling is the route by which their children can escape poverty, and they often demand discipline because they feel it will bring performance. In fact, studies cited by Holt (especially in *Freedom and Beyond*), Illyich, Kozol, Dennison, Paul Goodman, William Ryan and a host of others indicate that in the game (school) rigged to produce a few winners at the expense of many losers, the poor almost always remain poor, while the rich are passed up the educational ladder to assume the positions they were born to. Tracking is the most visible means by which this winnowing process is facilitated, but systems without tracking often accomplish it in

³ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

more subtle ways, such as by labeling troublesome students brain-damaged, learning disabled, mildly retarded, emotionally disturbed, unmotivated, or hyperactive. As teachers are primarily middle class, and as the recipients of these labels are most likely to be the “different” students — those not brought up with the same values, preoccupations and language as the teachers — poor and minority kids get labeled. Once labeled, students are less likely to get serious help from teachers whose expectations for them are low, and in many cases they see themselves as unhelpable. In any event students leave school unable to read and write effectively, and the mere possession of a high school credential is no insurance against continuing poverty, except in ludicrous cases: you cannot, as Holt points out, become a street cleaner in New York City now without a high school diploma. The job doesn’t pay any more than it did when you could get it without the diploma, but nobody without a diploma can get it now. Is that the point? That by keeping those without diplomas excruciatingly poor and unemployable, we can intimidate people into staying in school?

Children Are Inquisitive

Holt would say that such tactics of fear and intimidation — the ads that warn the black that he’ll be called “boy” all his life if he doesn’t finish high school — miss the point entirely. Children are inquisitive creatures and active learners. They learn to talk without certified teachers, and there’s plenty of proof (Holt, again, but especially Herbert Kohl in *Reading, How To* and Fader and McNeill in *Hooked On Books*) that kids who are allowed to discover reading on their own will learn how to do it quickly with minimal “unprofessional” assistance from someone — an adult or an older child — who can read. Schools break this process into many graded steps, some of them demonstrably more difficult than reading, and thus create more opportunities to rank children, to set them in manufactured competition with one another. I can still remember clearly the color coded reading kits we worked on in elementary school. The colors fooled nobody; we all knew the kids who were

still in the red group in November were clods. More importantly, the members of the red group knew it, and probably didn't get much of a kick out of reading, except when they pilfered the more interesting blue or purple selections and, haltingly, read them.

Such notions will be lost on teachers who believe they have a responsibility to test and rank students in order to prepare them for a society outside of school in which they'll be tested and ranked. Likewise parents who don't think school should be enjoyable ("Once they get out, they'll have to work at something they hate. What's the point of all this game playing and fooling around?") will not embrace the abolition of compulsory education. In the short run this is understandable. Compulsory schooling keeps the unemployment figures down by prohibiting a substantial portion of the population from working or seeking work. If the schools were to close tomorrow, wages would drop, and work would become even more scarce than it is now, making it even tougher on working class parents. Moreover, in the long run "unschooled" or less schooled kids might be less willing to accept what Holt calls "moronic work," and less likely to fall into the syndrome of "hating themselves for having to do it — in time hating all those who do not have to do it."⁵ — potentially a threatening change for many present-day workers.

So despite Holt's disclaimer that "poverty is not a reading problem and better reading won't solve it,"⁶ the elimination of compulsory institutions which don't teach children to read very well would have profound political consequences. The opportunity to escape systems which reaffirm the logic of and the necessity for their poverty might very well prove a liberating experience for the children of poor folks.

What's Wrong With the System

If this prediction seems vague, it may be partly because we are a society so committed to the machinery of schooling and certifi-

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

cation that it is difficult to imagine another way. The alternatives to "schooling," the learning-by-doing opportunities, learning exchanges, store front learning centers and street corner reading helpers suggested by Holt (and Illyich)⁷ seem a patchy replacement for the multi-billion-dollar system of public education we now support. But Holt's explanation of what's wrong with schools through his examination of what's right with healthy learning situations he has experienced anchors *Instead of Education* in our reality. We must not let our acculturation to "educational" systems wherein we are either failed or approved and passed along blind us to the real learning we have accomplished under more natural circumstances — the musical instrument we have learned to play from a teacher or friend; the foreign language we had "taken" in school, but never learned until we visited the country where people speak it; the sport we have learned to appreciate by attending a game with a passionate expert, or by practicing it on our own for many hours. Those of us who aren't dead are constantly asking questions and learning things, and it is indisputable that we do these things more effectively when we are free from fear and the distractions of a synthetic competition based on somebody else's standards.

If the theory behind Holt's exhortation to escape the schools sounds good, there are ambiguities within its implementation. As Holt recognizes, his book will only speak to the small minority of people who have thought enough about the school system in this

⁷ Most readers who have gotten this far will be familiar with these ideas. Below is a brief explanation, but Holt (*Instead of Education, Freedom and Beyond*) and Ivan Illyich (*Deschooling Society*) speak much more effectively for themselves.

The alternative and natural learning situations have in common the commitment to meet individuals where they are without coercion. Learning exchanges, which already exist in several of our cities, match people who have something to teach with people who want to learn that something, at which point it becomes the responsibility of the participants to work out mutually satisfactory details. Holt has been associated with store front learning centers and free schools in Boston and discusses their advantages in this book and others. They differ from public schools because nobody has to go, and because people can use the resources of the centers to learn what they want individually or in groups. Holt's description of the Beacon Hill Free School in *Instead of Education* provides a fine sense of how a community can grow up around this kind of endeavor. Street corner reading helpers are people who wear badges declaring their willingness to help anyone who can't read something.

country to recognize that it cannot be “reformed.” That schools have basically bad purposes, and that they cannot be made good places for children, for teaching, learning, intelligence, or growth, until these purposes are taken away from them; that these purposes cannot be taken away by people working in the schools, but only by the general public.”⁸ Many of the people who have reached these conclusions and who will welcome a clear statement of them are aware, committed men and women who happen also to be teachers. Given that these teachers are not changing the system of the schools, they help the students with whom they work to learn and grow despite the context. They do this through the warmth they feel toward their students and the respect and affection they generate in those students. These teachers grow discouraged and leave the system very quickly now, and messages like Holt’s will accelerate the process. Even if we agree that the long term revolution against the educational system in this country requires its abandonment by these teachers, it’s not an appealing prospect. It assumes turning the students over to teachers whom Holt describes by referring to Myron Brenton’s *What’s Happened To Teacher*:

Large numbers of teachers have shown that most of them are not informed or curious. They read very little. Their favorite magazine is *Reader’s Digest*. Many of them read only one book per year; of those who read more, most read light escape fiction. Like average people in most modern countries, they don’t know much and they can’t do much — and what they know or can do, they don’t talk about or do in school. They are not people that curious, active, and healthy children would choose to spend much time with.⁹

It’s a grim picture, and it’s a measure of Holt’s conviction that he is willing to take on the wrath of critics who will hold it up to him. He is a veteran of the schools who feels they’ve had it. He offers a variety of ways to avoid the system — don’t let the school system know about your child; get yourself a teacher’s certificate and keep your child out of school legally: register your child in an

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

alternative school which will afford him/her "credit" for whatever the child and you decide you would like to do as far as education is concerned; or if your child must go to school, at least get him/her some teacher's manuals so he/she doesn't have to waste a lot of time guessing "right" answers. All these are plans for individuals, and it's frustrating to be denied a blueprint for immediate mass action against the school system, but it's also undeniable that if enough people accept individual responsibility for avoiding and subverting the killing system Holt indicts and for inventing and taking advantage of real learning alternatives, school will lose much of the power it has had over our lives and the lives of our children.

Holt predicts that we'll have to deal with the school system for another decade yet, which may sound optimistic, but may not be overly so. The cry for the dismantling of the schools will make more sense now to middle class and working class parents than it ever has before, not only because schooling is becoming increasingly and prohibitively expensive, but because the media have made us all aware of the legions of degreed citizens with no prospect of useful employment. Yet the institutions at the top of the schooling pyramid haven't begun to learn. Several universities recently announced that they would respond to the fact ("crisis") that students are graduating from high school without the ability to write complete sentences by creating Ph.D. programs to train teachers to teach these students this mysterious skill. Their answer to bad schooling is *more* schooling. The school system is entrenched and has resisted change, but the combination of hard times for graduates and this sort of self-congratulatory stupidity may combine to thoroughly discredit the schooling process faster than even Holt has predicted.

The Teacher as a Public and Private Person

A Review of The Small Room, by May Sarton

NANCY F. SIZER

May Sarton, *The Small Room*, W. W. Norton and Company: New York, 1976 (originally published in hard-bound, 1961)

T*he Small Room*, by May Sarton, a novel set in a women's college, concerns the first year of a young teacher, Lucy Winter, and her adjustment to two demanding partners: to an institution which is described as a "close community" and, even more demanding, to the profession of teaching itself. Although it concerns a college, and not the secondary school which is the arena for this journal, the novel describes teaching in general very clearly and provocatively and thus seems a fine adjunct to the picture of "Teachers on Teaching."

Every new teacher learns that there are both public and private sides to this job; both are demanding, but in radically different ways; neither can be neglected to attend to the other. The "public" side requires attention to the community, the class and the communal experience in the classroom. The teacher's job here is to know the subject matter, to explain clearly, to reach everybody, to value everybody, to bring a central message to all. "Coverage" implies not just that a certain body of knowledge is explained fully, but that it be explained in such a way that everybody understands it. Impartial, attentive, dispensing all the old, good jokes and insights,

the teacher crafts a year-long (or term-long) association out of a group of individuals. They might never have chosen to associate with the teacher or with each other, but here they are, and for 120 hours of "contact." It is the teacher who accepts the strands from every corner of the room, rejects very few, refines some others, places certain ones in the center of the cloth and supervises the whole weaving process. It is exposure: a group experience, and a public life.

A master of this process is described in Chapter 8 of *The Small Room*. The teacher, heading inexorably toward a few major themes which by the end of the hour are to be completely understood, nevertheless allows the students to initiate the discussion within a focus set by her. The teacher's contribution is in very brief comments between the students' statements, in humor as against their earnestness, in the environment, physical and intellectual, which she has created out of the four walls which have become her classroom. Most of all, the teacher's contribution is in her depth of knowledge of her students, her ability to guess what a student will say when her hand goes up. Knowing this, with her plan in the back of her head, and still controlling who speaks when, she can create a communal experience which inspires thought in the speaker and the listener and which at the same time reaffirms the class as a community.

Teachers try to create such fifty-minute cameos every day, and when on rare occasions they have, they *know* they are contributors. Getting the ideas out, getting them clear but not humdrum, getting the dynamic right, getting the class built is an achievement. But despite what the "professionalization" and evaluation movement in the teaching field would indicate, teachers are not successful if they are only public persons. They are meant to be private persons as well, and here May Sarton has also been able to describe some of the dimensions of the second challenge.

She writes, quoting one of the wise old teachers with whom she peoples her book:

"I'm going back to what you said about personal relationships. One of the problems is simply that after a month of watching you

and listening to you in class, your students know you far better and more intimately than you will ever know them. They feel related to you, you see. . . . Part of the art of teaching, I have come to believe, lies in how this pseudo-intimacy is handled. It can be fruitful.”¹

The teacher as a private person needs qualities which often seem to be the opposite of those needed by the public person. This is particularly confusing for student and teacher when they are engaged in both aspects of the relationship with the same person. Teacher as public person is objective, fair-minded, professional, knowledgeable, clear. Teacher as private person is subjective, compassionate, personal and able to admit to confusion. For the public person, all students are alike. The private person admits that some students are special. For the public person, the important achievement is the building of a common experience, a common commitment to a certain body of knowledge; but the important building for the private person is the relationship.

This relationship is the special, lopsided one of old to young; of one who has some specific knowledge to one who doesn't; of the person in authority to the person acknowledging authority; or, to put it bluntly, between the person who will still have to grade the paper and the person who is anxious for the results of this judgment. It is lopsided as well, if we believe the teacher quoted above, because on one side there is more knowledge and on the other side more power.

These relationships, crucial though they have been to nearly every one of us while we were growing up, *and* now, are difficult to fashion. They are awkward from the very beginning. They change all the time, even if they last for years. They exist on many different levels of emotional intensity. Some remain as dim memories, such as those which Lawrence Kohlberg described in the last issue of *The Andover Review*, when he said that although he didn't remember much American history, he could remember distinctly his American history teacher. That statement sent shivers down this

¹ Sarton, May, *The Small Room*, p. 40.

American history teacher's spine! What will they choose, out of so many hours which we have spent together, to remember?

Inspirational Relationships

Other relationships such as the attachments which I still feel for my favorite (best?) high school and college teacher are more than dim memories; they are really crucial. I cannot remember either of these persons as phenomenally effective at the public side of the job. Neither was particularly charismatic, and although they were both people who impressed me at the time as "knowing a lot" and being excited by the ideas and events we studied, I cannot remember much about that side of their work. What I remember is their inspiration as private people, and what I particularly remember is that they took me seriously, that they let me know that they cared for me, that they thought I was a good student, that they thought I could amount to something.

The magic of that message for the young all over the world has not been lost on May Sarton. She describes two such relationships, both imperfect but both fascinating. They contrast with my idealized picture, but novelists are *supposed* to find more flaws and more complexities in ongoing fictional relationships than a person will find in her memories. In one of Sarton's relationships, the teacher, wary of losing her professional stance, shrinks from the emotionalism and the need of her student. She is afraid at first that she cannot handle them both, cannot remain an objective teacher if she becomes a confidante. Later she loosens up, tentatively and discreetly reaches out, to the advantage of both the personal and academic life of the student. She discovers that it can be done. But she is cautious.

The other teacher smothers her student, needs to mean too much to her, broadcasts the message: "You are able. You could amount to something" *too* loudly. The student, for whom a little of this message would have been most welcome, crumbles under its overwhelming weight. It reminds one of the old Chinese story of the farmer who in his anxiety to see his crops grow goes out to the fields and tugs the plants upwards, until finally he pulls them out.

May Sarton's book is not particularly effective as a novel. Its main character remains static, wooden; many of her conflicts are not resolved or even moved sideways through all of the book's characters and events. Much of the plot is hard to believe, and the institution's dilemmas are too stereotypical.

But it is worth reading, if only for the lively description of the tasks and standards of the teacher and the excitement in one of the world's oldest professions. Teaching is as simple an activity as that of the old serving the young, making their time useful, exposing them to what is fascinating and hopeful about life, caring for them. It is also a complex activity with many possible dangers. May Sarton has captured this balance, and the public and private aspects of this demanding and fascinating line of work.

T O M

Each week he speaks
softer; I bend toward him.
He says, "more tests. Won't
be here Tuesday."
He returns with a new bandage,
less hair.
He gets thinner. The trees
get fuller with their
new leaves.

He has another series of tests
in the city: "out Thursday."
When he comes back his arm
is in a sling.
Crabapple trees throw their blossoms
into the rain.
Now he says nothing — leaves shadow
campus walks.
He silently hands me the late papers.
His eyes are bluer than ever.
He has disappeared behind them,
practicing absence.

DONA STEIN

Reading About Teaching

NATALIE SCHORR

We teachers like to shut that classroom door — whether shutting ourselves inside or outside. First of all, though, I should explain that I am trying to include myself in generalizations about teachers in order to have practice with the pronoun *we*. It used to be technically correct for teachers to be *them* or *they* if mentioned at all in books, because books on education were written by distant authorities. It sounded to us as though the writers had never taught. Now that we are writing about teaching, we recognize that teachers as *they* were usually slurred: they were the ones — autocratic, power-hungry, selfish, dense and stunted — who subjected students to hours of dreary seatwork. But if the *we* does not fit, read it as editorial.

For us, alienated as we are, education is what is taught in a School of Education. When we read about education in that sense, and we rarely deign to, it seems quite remote from what goes on in our classrooms.

Our glory, our weakness is that we like what we do well enough to shut the door on the rest. There are few famous teachers and fewer rich ones, but we seem to come out well when we read the accounts of other workers in Studs Terkel's *Working*. Because we like to teach, we think we have to settle for the position of subordinates within a school as we answer the call, eschewing status, wealth and fame.

Reading about teaching is a step towards being able to write *we*. At least our own experiences are identified as worth writing about, and some teacher-writers are now suggesting that we do not have to make a poor bargain. We could like teaching and make a decent living from it too; decisions affecting our work could be ours; we might learn as apprentices with less trial and error — perhaps even

work with teachers who would not just share those of their ideas guaranteed not to work. The mystique of teaching has sometimes blinded us to our common interest, but, because teaching is by its nature personal and individualistic, we need not worry about losing these characteristics as we share the hard work.

I set out with the question — “Can a teacher learn anything about teaching from a book?” — accompanied by the ghost of the answer I wanted. The *yes* at first seemed elusive as I plowed through one self-improvement book after another. Most books about teaching are in the least promising category. Too many books advertised as “at last, practical!” turn out to be full of opinionated chatter about abstractions. Nevertheless, two unexpected conclusions took shape. One discovery was that much is still to be written, much needs to be written about teaching. In spite of the plethora of how-to books, some recent books about teaching — those which go furthest in new territory — show how much is still unknown. Dan Lortie, in *Schoolteacher*, goes far towards a job description of teaching, and along the way suggests how that description might change. Paul West, in *Words for a Deaf Daughter*, describes the climate of learning and shows how little is known about learning itself.

A second and related discovery was that the kind of book, not just the quality of a book, is a factor in its usefulness. A catalogue of resources is more useful than a book about how to teach. Good compendiums, such as *The Whole Word Catalogue 2*, are a boon to a teacher because adapting materials is more acceptable than adopting theories. Most authors of books on how to teach say, in effect, “I’ll supply the philosophical ideas and all you have to do is to implement them.” The reader wants to answer back, “No. You supply the materials and I’ll just fill in the big ideas.”

Personal accounts can usually be trusted more than any other kind of book about teaching, and the more specific they are, the more revealing. Numerous recent accounts, whether in fiction, as Robert Pirsig’s *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, or in non-fiction, as Sylvia Ashton-Warner’s *Spearpoint*, tell what really happens in classrooms. Joyce Carol Oates is mercilessly accurate in satirizing what teachers do outside of classrooms. I was tempted

to review only personal accounts because they are the ones I like best.

Expanding the rubric of books about teaching to include a sampling of different kinds of books published in the last ten years, I have tried to suggest what sort of result might be expected from each type of book, as well as the characteristics of particular books.

Teaching as a Subversive Activity. Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner. (New York: Delacorte Press, 1969)

Teaching as a Subversive Activity is no worse than many books of its kind, but it seems a fair target for criticism since it has had more acclaim than most. Two years after it was published it was in its fourteenth printing. It is a sloppy, pretentious book which capitalizes on other people's ideas in lieu of originality and which interprets the theories of others in a way that is inexcusable. Halfway through the book comes the statement:

It might be said, however, that insofar as education is concerned, Korzybski and McLuhan (and Ames and Richards and Weiner and Heisenberg and Einstein *et al.*) have had about equal impact: zero.¹

This exaggeration is revealing because by taking on the role of popularizers Postman and Weingartner try to succeed where they see others as having failed. They think that by writing in a different kind of language, one that is meant to be more accessible, they will convey the same message more effectively. The result is that they belittle strong ideas by appropriating them for their faddish purposes.

The authors use quotation marks in a peculiar way, sometimes as a sneer, sometimes to indicate that they must use tainted words, as in their explanation of the title: "Those who are sensitive to the verbally built-in biases of their 'natural' environment seem 'subversive' to those who are not."² Quotation marks become more and more distracting as they multiply, jumping out from each page until eventu-

¹ *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*. Postman and Weingartner, p. 105.

² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

ally Postman and Weingartner are writing: "And how is it that two people 'look at' the 'same thing' and 'see' different things,"³ instead of the usual rendering of the cliché. Rather than sounding subversive or sensitive, they just sound silly.

They oversimplify until their own philosophy could be summarized as: the less you know the better, because then you can admit you know less. Their bias is given away by the kind of example they constantly choose. When they praise an English teacher for admitting that she never did like Shakespeare, one suspects that they are commending her taste as well as her honesty. To quote from one of their proposals for change:

Have "English" teachers "teach" Math, Math teachers English, Social Studies teachers Science, Science Art, and so on.⁴

The problem with this and with so many books of the late sixties is that the kind of teaching advocated can be successful only when accompanied by a love of knowledge. When information and memory are summarily dismissed, all of the authors' meaningful questions are left to their own earnest echoes.

At a few years remove, books touted as explosive usually read like parodies. In 1969, Postman and Weingartner were saying that few if any current teachers were salvageable. By 1973 the fashion had changed and they repudiated the tone of this book. Calling themselves ex-hollers, they wrote a sort of consumer's guide to educational jargon, *The School Book: for people who want to know what all the hollering is about*. They could go on indefinitely, hollering and ex-hollering.

Words for a Deaf Daughter. Paul West. (Harper and Row: New York, 1970)

Because West tells through description, his book outstrips paraphrase and summary, but it does several things which have never been done better in conventional books about teaching. West dismantles the myth that children must conform to certain expecta-

³ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

tions in order to be suitable students for bright people; he figures out what needs to be learned by joining the learner; he opens new possibilities for the English language by writing his words about a zany kind of communication which has its own language. Furthermore, he writes about his own deaf and probably brain damaged child lovingly without becoming maudlin. Her personal lexicon is unlocked in the chapter "Babel 100 Plus," and in other chapters offbeat information is gathered on her behalf. In one of his many asides, West writes:

Getting to Atlantis would be one way of symbolizing it, and getting there is hard, but not as hard as if we thought getting there impossible. . . . Your world we read as open-ended and you have made our own the same. Of the materials and time consumed, let's not even think; there is always an advance going on: you change and change and change, outstripping these words even as I set them down.⁵

West tries every method of finding out how the world is apprehended by his daughter and feels grateful to her for what he discovers in the process.

⁵ *Words for a Deaf Daughter*, Paul West, p. 166.

The Hungry Ghosts: seven allusive comedies. Joyce Carol Oates. (Black Sparrow Press: Los Angeles, 1974)

Joyce Carol Oates, as teacher, writes this book "for those fictitious and ghostly colleagues whose souls haunt this book." On the next page comes the statement, "All characters and events in this book are fictitious and no resemblance to real persons is intended, or should be inferred." "Fictitious" is repeated with good reason: teachers who are not employed by fictitious Hilberry College can identify their follies or those of their fictitious colleagues in these acerbic satires. The hungry ghosts are driven by a desire for fulfillment which they try to assuage in conventions, committees, publishing — everywhere except in their teaching. The book should be of particular interest to secondary school teachers who think that college teachers are better off.

In "Pilgrim's Progress," the short story which received second prize in the O. Henry awards of 1972 (the original title was 'Saul Bird says, "Relate! Communicate! Liberate!"'), Oates creates one of the few really despicable contemporary villains. "Though he was a professor of English, Saul had not much interest in poetry. He argued that the meaning of life was action, involvement with other human beings, the trappings of the past were finished — books, lectures, classrooms, academic status. He, Saul Bird, was being fired only because he represented the future."⁶ The charismatic Saul Bird organizes meetings and a strike instead of meeting his classes. He thinks it best to stay away from the occupation himself, however, going off to a new job, leaving the mess he made to his battered followers. This particular story makes a good antidote for *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*. The whole collection represents some of Oates' best writing.

Schoolteacher, a Sociological Study. Dan C. Lortie. (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1975)

Schoolteacher is well worth reading because Lortie gives a satisfactory description of the structure of the teaching occupation. This sociological account overthrew two prejudices of mine. One was that sociologists only confirm what one would never have doubted, the other that nothing interesting can be conveyed in jargon. Lortie really does "provide persuasive documentation of genuine insights" — his professed aim. His technical vocabulary conveys complex and fascinating information, although the language is cumbersome as may be seen from this statement:

The repetitive discrediting of the past has contributed to . . . the lack of systematic codification of practical experience. Teaching has not been subjected to the sustained, empirical, and practice-oriented inquiry into problems and alternatives which we find in other university-based occupations.⁷

One of Lortie's most valuable methods is contrasting teaching with other ways of making a living. He documents individualism,

⁶ *The Hungry Ghosts*, Joyce Carol Oates, p. 49.

⁷ *Schoolteacher*, Dan C. Lortie, p. 69.

“presentism” and conservatism, characteristics which he finds in teachers as a group. Teachers tend to work apart from each other and to want to set individual standards. Presentism refers to the fact that teaching usually does not provide the increases in responsibilities and in status which are found in other careers; teachers rely for rewards on daily experience. Teachers tend to be conservative since the knowledge which most influences a teacher comes from the experience of having been taught.

Lortie describes the conflict between the tasks which a teacher is expected to perform and the constraints which limit effectiveness. Teachers are dependent on an administrative structure; there is no tradition of a “shared ordeal” for teachers confronting the same problems; teachers are not offered professional training for performing the tasks that other professionals are trained for:

In each comparison, we found that persons performing tasks similar to teachers’ enjoyed greater status rights. Teachers have fewer resources, and less control over them, than theater directors. Teachers have less discretionary power and fewer resources than managers. Teachers have less formal recognition to support their judgments than do psychotherapists.⁸

The final chapter of *Schoolteacher* offers some possible scenarios for change, and Lortie argues that “unless teachers substitute professionally oriented values for those they currently express, they will be hard pressed to claim professional status in a centralized system of public education.”⁹ In particular, he urges stronger ties among colleagues as a way of counteracting “the intellectual narrowness induced by mutual isolation” and of lessening subordination to vertical authority.

On Teaching. Herbert Kohl. (Schocken Books: New York, 1976)

It is unusual, in American society, for a man to say that elementary school teaching is an important job. *On Teaching* would be signifi-

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

cant if only for that, and for the fact that Kohl admits that the restructuring of school time means more work for the teacher and then shows why such restructuring is worthwhile.

Kohl makes a case for teaching as a means of effecting social change. His book includes a section on the reasons for choosing to be a teacher and an appendix in which research supporting educational change is cited. The two major sections of the book are on the craft of teaching and on the politics of teaching. Kohl gives practical advice on techniques for developing original curriculum material and cites other useful books throughout. He is able to convey his particular experiences in such a way that some element of them is probably recognizable to all teachers, and his advice is both specific and sensible.

Troubled Teachers. Esther P. Rothman. (David McKay Co.: New York, 1977)

Rothman's background as teacher, psychologist and principal of one of the toughest high schools in New York qualifies her as much as anyone to publish her opinions. That they are provocative may be seen from this sampling:

Children should be paid to learn. Learning is their business, just as working is an adult's.¹⁰

We say that black teachers really understand black students better than do white teachers. It then follows that white teachers understand white students better than do black teachers. It become a matter of common agreement, an agreement based on fear — one that is totally untrue — that the values of the black and white communities are different. Therefore, teachers must teach children of their own racial group.¹¹

I cannot find one single act that a teacher should be permitted to do in a school building that a child should not equally be permitted to do. . . .¹²

¹⁰ *Troubled Teachers*, Esther P. Rothman, p. 74.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 100.

Pain has no place in a classroom, but failure does. Through failure we learn.¹³

. . . I don't know of any teacher who became a better teacher or who worked harder because of a raise.¹⁴

Troubled Teachers is an assortment of essays, the best of which describes the power games that teachers play with students. The games of omniscience, professionalism, confidentiality, competition and testing, standards and behavior modification will seem familiar to most teachers. The troubled teachers of the title might at first be taken to be perplexed teachers, but, apparently, they are misguided and mixed-up teachers. Rothman's emphasis is on helping teachers confront the feelings and motivations that interfere with teaching. Rothman makes her points with personal anecdotes, some of which seem to be vendettas, but her outrage at techniques which humiliate students is justified.

Reading *Troubled Teachers* has been likened to having a sensitivity session with the author. At times it is also like being harangued by the author, who has a penchant for rhetoric, often starting three or four sentences in a row with the same words. Fortunately, everything that Rothman says carries conviction, and much of it makes sense. In many ways, *Troubled Teachers* is the book of someone who is too busy to write a book, but who has had experience worth putting on record.

The Whole Word Catalogue 2. Edited by Bill Zavatsky and Ron Padgett. (McGraw Hill Paperbacks: New York, 1977)

The eighty-six articles of this second catalogue are filled with suggestions for teaching writing, drama, art and music. The exercises, as published here, were used in elementary schools; some of them come from courses originally offered in colleges, and many could be adapted for use in secondary schools.

Moving away from the neatly packaged formulas more typical of the first catalogue, the second catalogue emphasizes broader ob-

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 249

jectives. Some exercises are straightforwardly grouped under the heading of Gimmicks, but even these are presented in the context of particular goals. As the introduction forewarns, there is much here that seems useless or wrongheaded and much that seems sound; which is which will probably vary for each reader. The annotated lists of books and records and the use of a few suggestions alone would make this book worth its price of \$6.95.

Articles are supplied by members of the Teachers and Writers Collaborative. The advantage of their position as classroom visitors is that they need not be guarded about enjoying their work with children because they are not subordinates in the school. (Lortie points out in *Schoolteacher* how common the *but* is in the answers of teachers to his question about what makes a good teacher. Classroom teachers can never say that a teacher has fun with a class without adding *but* he is strict or *but* she sets high standards.) The disadvantage is that there is something artificial about a landscape in which children are called kids and teachers are called artists in the classroom. Only in handing over their bag of artistic tricks to fellow teachers do these magicians reach solid ground.

Contributors

ARTICLES

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POEMS

MARCIA FALK's new translation of *The Song of Songs* has just been published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Other poems and translations have appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies. She currently teaches Hebrew and Comparative Literature at SUNY Binghamton.

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DONA STEIN recently received a Poetry Fellowship from the Massachusetts Arts and Humanities Foundation. She attended the Breadloaf Writers Conference as a Margaret Bridgman Scholar this past summer, and her poems have appeared in numerous small magazines, including the *New York Quarterly*, *Ploughshares*, *West End*, *Washout*, *Dark Horse* and *Zeugma*.

LAURA JENSEN's poems have been published in many magazines. A book of her poems, *Anxiety and Ashes*, has been published by The Penumbra Press, and a short pamphlet is forthcoming from the Graywolf Press. She lives in Tacoma, Washington.

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